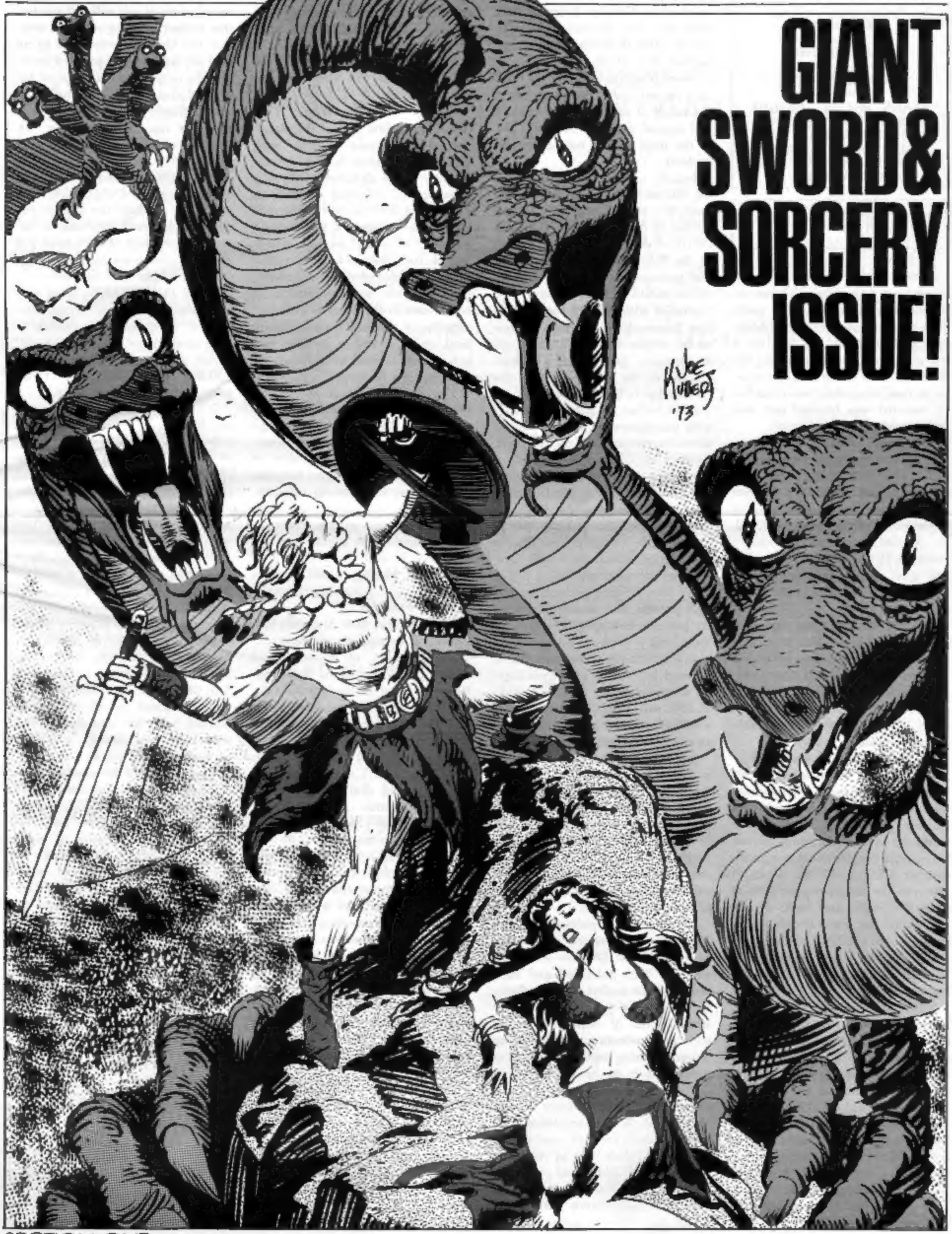
COMIXSCENE

NO.5 SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

JULY – AUGUST 1973 • ONE DOLLAR

GIANT SWORD & SORCERY ISSUE!



SECTION ONE

COMIXSCENE
JULY – AUGUST 1973 No. 5
COMIXSCENE–a bi-monthly newspaper devoted to comic art and all its aspects, is published by Supergraphics/218 North Sixth Street / Reading, Pennsylvania
SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Single issue .75–Year subscription $4.00 Send all subscriptions and correspondence to
COMIXSCENE
Box 445 / Wyomissing, Pa. / 19610
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and the brotherhood of comic artists and writers.

EDITORIAL

By Crom!!

Getting together a sword and sorcery issue of *COMIXSCENE* has unquestionably been the most ambitious undertaking with this publication to date. When the idea for it was conceived, we began listing the possibilities for features in the issue. In no time, everything we considered essential was blocked out, text and graphics in ample supply.

Too ample, in fact!

It seemed the material we planned to offer was far too much to fit into our format. We had a decision to make: cut back on the material or publish a special issue. As usual, we decided to extend ourselves to maintain SUPERGRAPHICS' policy –to give our readers the highest quality publications in content and format.

Keeping that promise can raise hell with deadlines, but, as an end result, you, the reader, ultimately benefits from our policy. Our publications are NEVER apologetic and always give more for the money spent than any other comparable package available today.

We mean to keep it that way!

A quick look at this issue will reaffirm that promise to you! Besides the most extensive and up-to-the-moment proceedings in the comic world, we have, in deference to your letters regarding this matter, expanded our MEDIA SCENE section to give you the most complete look at films, TV, radio, and books as any publication has ever offered. In the future, *COMIXSCENE* will keep you posted on the latest developments in each of these areas as they're happening.

While we're on the subject, we'd like to introduce you to our latest correspondents. Don Glut has been a familiar name to comic fans for a long time with his film projects. He has since turned his avocation into a successful vocation–and reveals some of the intracies of being a comic scripter in this issue. Besides being a freelance writer, Don has authored a number of books on his favorite subjects: Frankenstein, Dracula and film serials. Most data on these next issue.

It is also a pleasure to welcome Doug Murray to our growing list of contributors. Besides being an authority on film, comic art and science fiction, (all of which he'll be writing about in the Media Scene section), Doug publishes his own magazine, *Heritage*, a top-quality magazine focusing on the cosmic worlds of Flash Gordon and his creator, Alex Raymond. Packed with some of the most impressive art and stories to be seen today, *Heritage* 2 can be had, while they last, by sending five dollars to: 2040 Wellwood Ave., Farmingdale, N.Y. 11735.

We're proud to add both of these men on our staff. They are part of the result of our efforts to improve and expand what we believe is one of the most unique publications of its kind.

Swords, sorcery and swashbuckling adventure abounds this month from the news through the second section of this SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE. A definitive essay on "Conan of the Pulps" heads off this section and prefaces the remaining content which includes Glut's creative confrontation with his S&S hero Dagar, Ken Bruzenak's compelling feature on the origins of heroic fantasy, and an extensive coverage of the "Barbarians in the Comics," from the Golden Age to the present.

Each feature is lushly illustrated with complimentary and, in several instances, rare art and reproductions. Readers will find within these pages a profuse portfolio of barbaric action and adventure, lustily illustrated by the Conans of the comic business: Wood, Kubert, Smith, Kirby, Maroto, Santos, de la Fuentes. Our sincere thanks, gentlemen–from all your fans, myself included.

My own offering presents an offbeat portrait of a nameless mercenary just after indulging in his favorite sport, and a personal interpretation of a host of soldiers and swordsmen inspired by history and mythology. As a special bonus to all *COMIXSCENE* subscribers only, we include a full-color poster of my own long-awaited barbarian, TALON.

Just as a teaser, the Talon piece is a preview of our next series of portfolios, based on the legendary heroes of myth, literature and history. Each will be comparable to the poster art with ten illustrations to a portfolio, all high quality and suitable for framing. *COMIXSCENE* will let you know when these limited editions are available.

Speaking of new publications, *The Mike Hinge Experience, as* advertised in *COMIXSCENE* for several issues has been published and back orders will be mailed out immediately. Thanks for your patience. *The Encyclopedia of Super Heroes* is still in production. All advance orders are being kept on file pending publication in the near future.

While we're plugging books, we'd like to take this opportunity to mention one of the most ambitious projects on comic research ever undertaken–the *Who's Who of American Comic Books*. Editor and publisher, Jerry Bails, one of the pioneers of comic fandom, claims that nearly 50,000 man-hours of painstaking research has gone into the book by himself and his staff. Having done a certain amount of work in that direction myself, I don't doubt it a moment.

To be published in four volumes, the first edition will carry well over two thousand biographical listings. The *Who's Who* is not an elitist directory, but rather an attempt to provide the best available biographical data for each and every writer, artist and editor who has contributed original material to America's four-color comics magazines. In short, it is to be a biographical record of the contributors to this field over its 45-year history.

Volume I of the *Who's Who*, covering the first part of the alphabet (A-F), is now in print, with subsequent volumes listing the remainder of the alphabet (G-Z) and other special reference material to see print at intervals within the next two years. Volume IV will include a number of special sections: a listing of contributors to the related fields of black-and-white and underground comic book publishers, a cross-index to the creators and contributors of the most popular comic book strips, a key to by-lines and pen names, as well as a variety of other special features.

The first volume of the *Who's Who* is available in the U.S. and Canada at $5.00. Considering the amount of time, effort and money that has gone into this project, it has to be one of the biggest bargains ever. If you are a comic collector, researcher or connoisseur, this work is a *must* for your library. The massive undertaking to which Jerry has dedicated himself requires the total support of fandom. Don't let him down.

How's your FOOM?

Yeah, I know how it sounds but, believe it or not, it's catching on! We're speaking, of course, about Marvel's new fan club. Being actively involved in the organization, you'll have to take our word for it that the club has taken off like a rocket. The second issue of *Foom Magazine* has just been published, so if you haven't already done so, join now and don't miss another book in the series.

When Smilin' Stan gave us the OK to develop the club and its official magazine, we recalled the era of radio premiums and all the excitement they generated. With that thought in mind, we set ourselves to the task of recreating that excitment in the membership kit and the magazine. Two issues have since been published, crammed cover-to-cover with puzzles, articles, pin-ups, codes, crosswords, photos, covers news, checklists and an eyeful of other goodies. Details appear in every Marvel book if you're interested.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS: This double issue of *COMIXSCENE* counts as two issues on our subscription listings. If you ordered a six-issue subscription (for example from 3 to 8) it will be shortened by one issue (now from 3 to 7). If your subscription started with this issue, you'll get four more regular-sized issues. We think you'll dig the idea of a double issue periodically when the subject matter warrants it. Write and tell us if you agree and how you liked this issue!

Effective July 1, *COMIXSCENE* subscription rates have been raised to $4.00 for six issues (double issues will count as two). The acute paper shortage has driven stock costs up 10% for the last several issues, raising all kinds of hell with out production budget. Mailing costs are overdue, too. Our only recourse is to cut back on material and pages or maintain the format and ask more for the product (another Excedrin headache)! Single issues, starting with the next one will retail for .75. Subscription orders received after July 1, 1973 (at the previous $2.50 price) will be mailed 4 issues instead of 6. We think *COMIXSCENE* is worth the increase and believe you will too. We will continue to improve the content of each issue and give you more informative coverage of every subject as it happens.

VERY IMPORTANT: Many subscriptions will begin to run out after issue 6. Wait until you receive an issue marked "subscription expired" before you reorder. DO NOT RE-ORDER BEFORE YOUR CURRENT SUB RUNS OUT!

It is with the deepest regret that we inform comic fans the world over of the untimely death of Syd Shores. A tall, well-dressed, soft-spoken man, Syd brought a host of Golden Age characters to life under his skillful treatment. His Captain America, Bucky and Golden Girl were as memorable as any that populated that era's pages. Syd's Black Rider was a masterpiece of western action as was his "Wild Bill" Pecos series. But he will probably be best remembered for his exquisite Blonde Phantom–the lady of the crime comics. More recently, he has delineated the adventures of Daredevil, The Ghost Rider and Red Wolf. He will be missed by all of us who worked with him and by his fans who knew him through a lifetime of dedication to comics.

That's about it for another issue. Coming up next, a special CRIME AND VIOLENCE ISSUE with an extended coverage of the "Iron Fist" films and the new wave of super-violent books with an emphasis on the best-selling Executioner series. Future issues of *COMIXSCENE* currently in the planning stages are being designed for maximum excitement. We'll give you a run-down of what's in store for readers next issue.

But for now, buckle your swashes and prepare to enter the world of sword and sorcery. Til next time, take care.

Steranko

This issue is dedicated to
WALLY WOOD
for his inspiration and
dedication to comics.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Each issue of *Comixscene* has brought increased interest in our publication and the things that go into making it one of the most widely read and discussed fanzines today. People are constantly asking about the future of *Comixscene*, what changes will be made and how we will make them. The one question that everyone seems to ask, however, is how we gather and edit the news for *Comixscene*.

The fact is that there is no secret formula or intricate network of spies and informants, but a combination of hardwork, a lot of reading and some careful editing. As reporters, we have learned to keep our ears and eyes open for news items and releases that would interest our readers. This entails reading most of the comic books published today, both domestic and foreign. It means we must carefully scan newspapers and trade journals for small items relating to either comic book news or mediascene. It dictates that we must do a good deal of legwork and ask an impossible number of questions in order to fill our pages.

Essentially, we go straight to the comic and paperback companies for our news. Steranko makes a special trip to New York a week prior to each deadline in order to gather the news, choose the cover reproductions we will use and generally get the mood of the industry at that particular time. There have been trips where news was scarce and hard to come by, but there have also been times when it appeared as though we weren't going to be able to fit it all in.

Associate Editor Ken Bruzenak jots down page after page of notes and tries to obtain as much information as possible. To date we have been somewhat limited only to news that the companies choose to release. This has, at times, been compared to nothing more than our printing prepared and controlled news releases. While the overall picture of fanzine news may present itself in this way some of the time, this is not the case with *Comixscene*. There are, of course, reasons why we print certain items and ignore others, but generally these situations center around cooperation rather than control.

Many times a company is hesitant to go into great detail about a new project or a major change in their line, until it is finished and ready for marketing. Much of this is based on legal and copyright restrictions. If you have a story idea or a plan for a workable invention, which may make you successful, you certainly are not going to announce the entire concept to the public first! Comic book companies are the same way. They are large corporations dealing in loss and profit. If they show their hand too soon, it may result in losing a percentage of the new business to some fast working competitor —and as you know, this has been happening in the comics ever since 1939.

There is a healthy cooperation between the major companies and *Comixscene*, and we are allowed to give small hints concerning special projects. When the final release date is closer, we are usually allowed to use visuals and report on the item in greater detail. In this way, we feel there will be a solid trust built up between the comic book industry and those fans who are anxious to be in on the ground floor of each and every creation. Remember that *Comixscene* is still a relatively new venture, attempting to prove its credibility to both the fans and professionals.

Which brings us to the point of our reporting "leads" from outside sources. Rumors have proven to be dangerous and uncertain in this business. We avoid them entirely. The comic books themselves are hard enough to keep up with, much less our attempting to check out and print each and every juicy rumor that comes down the road. We have found that one day Stan Lee or Carmine Infantino might tell us of a change or project in the works, and the next day it will be dropped or re-shaped to fit any one of a number of reasons. They are not leading us on when they release such information, but are trying to give us an honest insight into what is happening at their companies. Not all ideas are good ones and not all plans are followed through to the end. What might be classified as 'pipedream reporting' by some, actually is the product of changing times and business restrictions.

Once all the news is gathered, it is sent to me for shaping, editing and revising. I attempt to put all the notes and ideas into a readable series of news notes. It is then sent back to Reading to be checked out with a representative of each company, typeset and for last minute additions to be made. It is always the last portion of *Comixscene* to be pasted up and readied for the printer, because we want to be as 'on top' of the news as possible.

An important thing to remember about the news you read in *Comixscene* is that we must give the reader something more than a remote possibility or a one-line teaser. An item like, "Jack Kirby will do a new book for National," is vague and not actually classified as NEWS. We like to give as much information as possible, sometimes a bit general, but something you can sink your teeth into. If little else is available, we go back and give you historical information on Kirby and his creations and what he is doing today. That way the reader will feel a bit more comfortable and will not be left hanging.

Lastly, we feel that *Comixscene* gives each reader both visual and journalistic satisfaction. There are no random lines of poorly typed text or shoddy paste-up jobs or valuable inches of space wasted by printing limitations. *Comixscene* presents the news in the best manner we know how, and most importantly we report it and put it together to satisfy you.

Gary Brown

● When subscribing to *COMIXSCENE* or ordering Supergraphics products, please follow the procedure outlined below: Subscribe to *COMIXSCENE* for a single issue or a year only—DO NOT SEND FOR ODD ISSUES. Subscriptions begin with the issue in production, not with previous issues. Single issues .75 - Six issue subscription $4.00 Back issues of *COMIXSCENE* are available See order form.

● FOREIGN SUBSCRIPTIONS: Our mailing process does not allow for *COMIXSCENE* subscriptions outside the USA. Due to the high cost of mailing and special handling, an additional $2.00 charge per 6 issues must accompany each foreign subscription.

USE THE ORDER FORM when ordering Supergraphics products. If you don't wish to cut up the issue, make a photo copy of the form and fill it in—or write out your complete name and address on a separate piece of paper for EACH product ordered.

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Before we forget, we recently unearthed a promotional publication on our projected strip, O'RYANN. Only several hundred copies remain of this 16-page book which summarizes the O'Ryann epic and tells how the concept was developed. Graphics include a series of lead-up approaches to the subject, pin-ups of the main characters and the contraversial splash page which resulted in Marvel rejecting the strip for publication. *O'RYANN* is outrageously priced at $3.00 plus .25 postage and handling for those of you completists who have dollars to burn.

HOW TO ORDER SUPERGRAPHICS PRODUCTS!

Use the order forms below to furnish the information needed to mail you the products you want. Check the boxes to indicate the material you are ordering. Add the amounts listed and write in the total on the line furnished. PRINT your name and address CLEARLY and include your zip code number. Fill out separate forms for the groupings listed below.

FOREIGN ORDERS (including Canada) in U.S. funds only. All orders outside U.S.A., add .25 postage and handling for each package ordered.

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- ☐ Encyclopedia of Heroes - Vol. 3 $3.00 plus .25 postage
- ☐ All three of the above books $7.50 — we pay postage
- ☐ History of Comics - Vol. 1 $3.00 plus .25 postage
- ☐ History of Comics - Vol. 2 $5.00 plus .40 postage
- ☐ Mike Hinge Experience $3.00 plus .25 postage
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MARVEL NEWS

Marvel's recent entry into the black and white market seems to have leveled off for the time being and no new titles are being planned at the moment. The difficulties on these books have proven to be more than anticipated, due to their rapid entry into the field, and every title but *Crazy* will go onto quarterly schedule. This extra time will be put to good use on each book in terms of allowing the artists and writers more time to fully develop their stories, turning these monster mags into the cream of the Marvel crop. To further enhance and excite the craftsmen working on these books, Roy Thomas has made it possible for artwork to be done in a special, large 12 1/2" by 18" inch size for more detail. The original artwork is being returned to the artists for their own personal use.

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Roy's pet project in the large magazines *Savage Tales*, is planned well in advance but there are still changes being made on a day to day basis. The first of these changes lies in the fact that Barry Smith got carried away with the Conan story "Red Nails" and has turned it into a nearly 60-page epic. The first 20 or so pages have run in *Savage Tales* 2, while another 35 to 40 pages will be run in issue 3. The direct result is that it almost completely exhausts the budget for original art for the book. Roy still plans to put some other new material in the book however, as well as continuing the reprints of the Joe Maneely Crusader strip for the next two issues. Arquel of Argos will make an appearance in the third issue as will two pages of Red Sonja by Esteban Maroto. The Red Sonja story that was announced for issue 3 will appear in 4 due to a crowding of space in the book and a desire to further develop the plot and character by Roy and Maroto. Future Conan stories will feature Adam's "Golden Skull" psuedo-adaptation, an original Thomas-Smith tale, and Barry's version of "A Witch Shall be Born."

The horror features are receiving a very good response in the letters department, and more of the text features are being done. Short fiction pieces are also going to be run in the future to explore this as a possible outlet for the creative energies of some of the Marvel writers. The heavy letter response to this type of article and fiction writing is being relied upon heavily in regard to the black and white books, but it must be remembered that *Monster Madness* received 1,000 letters in favor of such a policy before it was cancelled.

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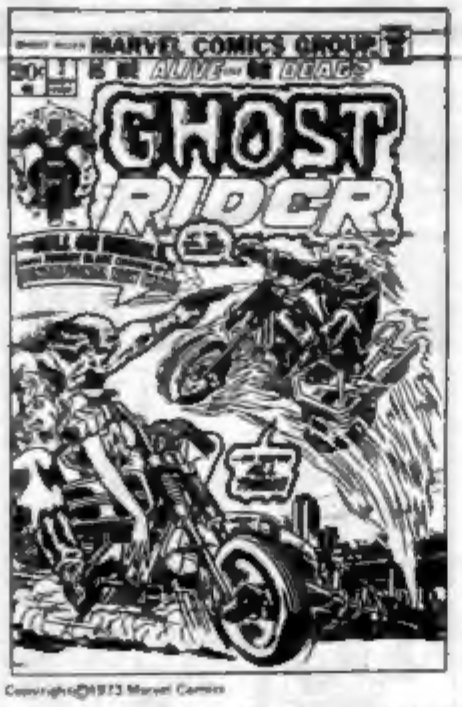

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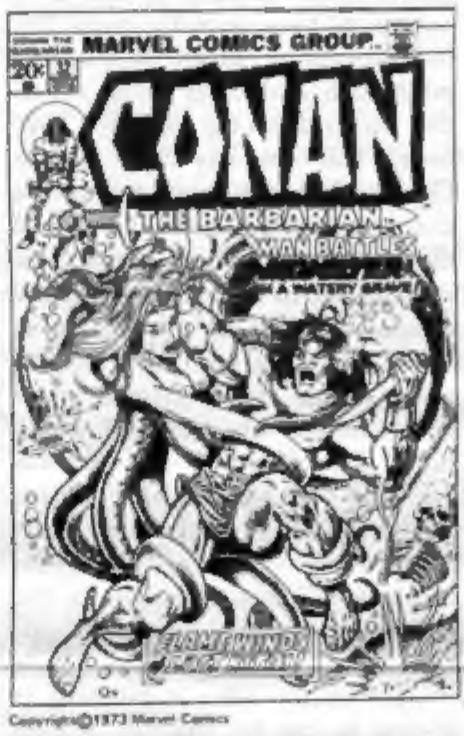
The subject of nudity in the big monster books has come up and the result is that all such scenes are to be avoided in the future. It seems that there have been various complaints coming back to the distributor from the outlets, so, in order to head off any trouble, Stan has decided to delete such nudity as could endanger the sales of the books.

Satanna, the new series in *Vampire Tales*, will be produced by Gerry Conway and Esteban Maroto beginning with issue 3, following an adventure by Roy Thomas and John Romita which pursues an idea by Stan Lee concerning the Devil's daughter.

In the book *Dracula Lives*, Roy Thomas and Dick Giordano are teaming up to produce 10 to 12 page adaptations of the original *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Roy would like to depict the entire novel in the Marvel magazine, then collect all of the chapters and bind them into a large book form, possibly hardback.

There is another Maroto cover for *Vampire Tales* coming up soon, and he also has the script to the August Derleth story "Drifting Snow." Also in *Vampire Tales* 3 is a Morbius story titled "Demon Fire" by Don McGregor, Rich Buckler and Klaus Janson. McGregor is also doing an August Derleth tale, "Bat's Belfry."

A new artist, signing his name V. Alcazar, recently walked into the Marvel offices with a job tucked under his arm. Though the script proved to be unsatisfactory, the art so impressed everyone that they rewrote the story and are going to run it soon under the title "Warrior's Burden" in one of the big monster books. Another new artist, Enrique Badia, will also be making his first Marvel appearance in *Zombie* 3 in the next month or so.



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Gullivar of Mars is not dead! He will be making a new, one-shot appearance in the pages of *Monsters Unleashed* 4 with the Man-Thing replacing him in issue 5.

The *Haunt of Horror* will be suspended with the second issue, pending the results of the first two issues' sales figures. The digest-sized pulp is on a quarterly schedule though, so if the decision is made to continue, there will be no long delay between issues 2 and 3.

Marvel's English line-up is doing so well at this time that plans are underway to begin publishing a third title in the not too distant future featuring the Avengers.

The second issue of *Crazy* will spoof the "Vault of Horror" by Wolfman, Stu Schwartzburg and Marie Severin, "McCloud" by Marv and Neal Adams and will feature a two-page reprint of Harvey Kurtzman's "Hey Look." Also in the issue are the usual fumettis, an Art Buchwald article and "Kelly's Cockeyed Canvases" by Kelly Freas, all packaged as a special Back-To-School issue.

Roy Thomas is currently working on a series of Conan stories that are an adaptation of an old Prester John tale by Norvell Page titled "Flame Winds." The story takes place in an ancient land resembling medieval China and involves the customary swashbuckling heroics and breath-taking derring-do.

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For the time being, production on the Doc Savage series will come to a halt with issue 8. Editor Thomas would like to continue the series, but has decided to lessen the work load for the bullpen while waiting for sales figures on the current books. The artwork on the final book will be handled by Rich Buckler and Tom Palmer.

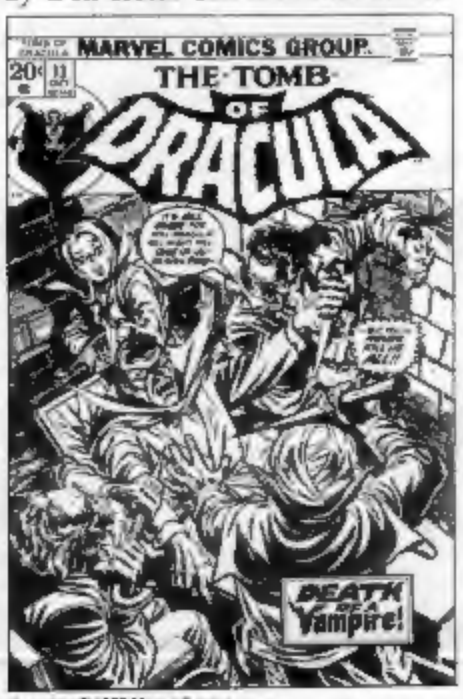
Other changes at Marvel include the cancellation of *Warlock*, *Combat Kelly* and *Red Wolf* in order to make room for three new titles: *Dead of Night*, *Uncanny Tales* and *Weird Wonder Tales*. This last book will be published on an alternating schedule with *Worlds Unknown*.

Another new series coming up is *The Master of Kung-Fu* by Steve

COMIXSCENE EXCLUSIVE: Barry Smith's preliminary drawing for his cover painting to appear on Savage Tales 3.

Englehart and Jim Starlin. Scheduled for release in September, this book will continue where the Sax Rohmer *Fu-Manchu* novels left off, carrying on the struggles of Nayland Smith against the insidious Oriental villian. The first episode offers the appearance of the son of Fu-Manchu, and his rebellion against his father's world-conquering ambition. Dr. Petrie will be among those to fall at the hands of the evil menace. Jim Starlin, a karate afficionado himself, will try to infuse an aura of believability to the fight sequences in the book by applying his knowledge of the subject. This title is intended as Marvel's contribution to the Kung-Fu, Iron Fist genre currently sweeping the country.

Ka-Zar will be relinquishing his position in *Astonishing Tales* to take over a new book of his own, drawn by Don Heck. The character *It* will



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be the feature in *Astonishing* from now on. A similar change is occuring in *Fear* as Morbius takes over the book while *Man-Thing* gets his own series on a monthly basis done by Steve Gerber, Val Mayerick and Dan Adkins.

With issue 14 of *Dracula* by Marv Wolfman, a Revivalist comes into the picture and, seeking to boost his congregational attendance, sets out to resurrect Dracula. Issue 15 will feature an experimental approach to *Dracula* in the form of four short stories, one of which will explain how Dracula happened to be in the coffin with a stake in his heart in issue 1. Issue 16 will be another experimental issue in which Marv explores the supernatural aspects of Dracula and pits him against a weird skeleton creature who is going about the countryside killing people for no apparent reason. Mystery abounds in this tale as both Dracula and Chelm (from *Dracula* 3) hunt the trenchcoat garbed villain in "Fear is the Name of the Game."

Thor 217 is titled "All Swords Against Them," and features an epic struggle of Asgardian against Asgardian as our heroes return to the fabled land. It seems as though imposters have taken over the throne and each must fight his double to the death. Issue 218 unfolds the Rigelean Colonizer's predicament in "Where Pass the Black Stars."

In issue 140 of the *FF*, the subplot problems of Reed and Sue's

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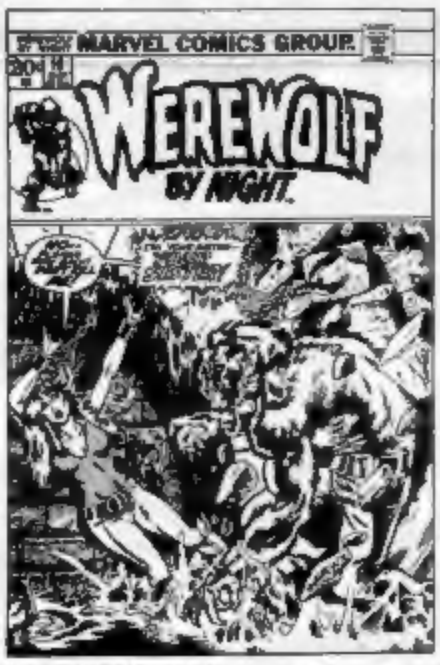

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separation are brought into focus. Sue is contacted by Agatha Harkness and an old villian returns to plague and eventually defeat the team. The origin and plans of the villian are explained in "Annihilus Revealed." In 141, little Franklin is the focal point of "The End of the F.F."

Scheduled to do issue 11 and 12 *Werewolf by Night*, Marv Wolfman, Gil Kane and Tom Sutton are going to introduce the Hangman, an overly-enthusiastic crime-fighter who sets out to right all wrongs by tracking down all evildoers. While all this is going on however, Jack Russell is getting a new apartment, new neighbors and a new set of problems.

In *Daredevil* 105, our intrepid hero is tossed over a cliff, rescued by Madame MacEvil and learns of Broderick's plot to conquer the world. Guest stars and villains in this issue include Kraven, The Dark Messiah, Ramrod, Angar, Terra of the Living Earth and Madame MacEvil in a 5-page origin sequence drawn by Jim Starlin.

Coming on the Marvel scene is the *new Savage Sub-Mariner*, who is actually the old Sub-Mariner in a new costume designed by Roy and John Romito. Present plans call for a period in which, due to another operation, Namor will return to do battle on the surface world, for a while anyway.

As Don McGregor takes over the *War of the Worlds* series, Killraven must fight the Warlord and his biologically-mutated beings. It seems as though the Martians are performing radioactive experiments in the hopes of creating host bodies into which they can project their life forces so that they can exist outside of their life-supporting mechanical tripods. There will also be several

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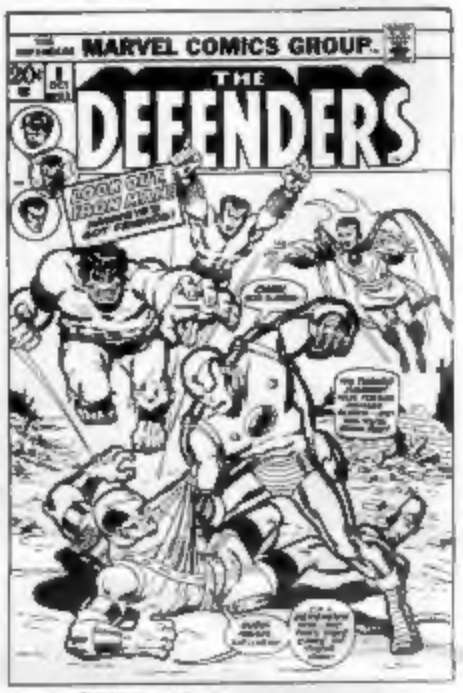
new supporting characters in the strip named Camilla Frost; Grok; and something or someone called Old Skull; an Errol Flynn character who is a black slave trader named Sabre; a not entirely human villain named Abraxas; and a woman's lib character named Mint Julip. These last three will be added in *Amazing Adventure* 22 in the story "Washington Nightmare" when Killraven goes to the Martian headquarters in Washington D.C.

Steve Englehart has lined up a battle royale between the Defenders and the Avengers as both books are occupied this month with fights between Thor and the Hulk, Valkyrie and the Swordsman, the Vision and the Surfer and Captain America and the Sub-Mariner. Would you believe Loki and a villian Dormamu are at the bottom of the entire thing?

Fury is still hospitalized, so he is out of the fight between Captain America and the Yellow Claw. In issue 167 of Cap's book, the Claw attacks SHIELD headquarters and tries to steal one of Dr. Doom's captured robots. His plans go astray, however, when Suwan turns against him and mortally wounds the yellow fiend. The Claw has the last laugh, as he rejuvenates himself by stealing her life force, turning her to dust. Roy Thomas will script an upcoming adventure of Cap's as a nostalgic reunion with the star-spangled Avenger.

Betty Talbot, as the Harpy, flies



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the Hulk to the deserted island of the Red Raven in issue 169 of ol' Greenskin's mag. Once on the island, they meet the last survivor of the strange bird-like race. (Again?) Modok arrives on the scene (he's back from the dead too?), and proceeds to disintegrate the island once and for all, Maybe!

Tony Stark gets into an argument with Happy Hogan over Pepper while Iron Man fights with Dr. Spectrum again in issue 64. Dr. Obatu also makes an appearance, just to add a little brightness to a tired superhero's day.

The Thing and Iron Man team-up in *Marvel Feature* 12 to battle the Blood Brothers, which ties into the recent Captain Marvel storyline. It seems as though all of the cosmic shenanigans being carried on by Mar-vell and Co. are being monitored and overseen by Thanos, and will

be resolved in a later issue of CM's mag.

Since proving that he can write as well as he can draw, Jim Starlin has begun to revamp the origin of *Captain Marvel* and is beginning to dig into the Captain's past.

The Vulture returns to plague *Spiderman* in issue 127 as Mary Jane witnesses a murder in the tale "The Dark Wings of Death." Meanwhile, the Green Goblin is being warmed up for a reincarnation, and Harry Osborn is going to get into some more trouble.

Marvel Team-Up will feature Spider-Man and the Sub-Mariner against Dr. Dorcas and the Aquanoids, marine creatures that have mutated into almost-human forms

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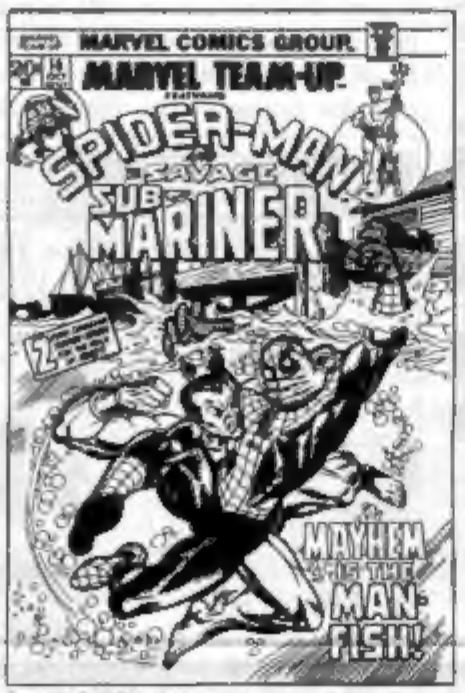
with the head and limbs of giant squid, manta rays, lobsters, etc.

In other issues of *Team-Up* Spiderman is going to be working with The Ghost Rider in a story by Wein, Ross Andru and Don Perlin. This story features a nemesis named the Orb and is titled "If an Eye Offend Thee . . ." There is a two-part tale in the works that pits Spidey against a villain called the Basilisk with guest appearances by Captain Marvel, Mr. Fantastic and the Mole Man. A new approach to this book is also coming up soon as the Torch and the Hulk become engaged in a battle royale, bumping Spidey out of the book for at least one issue.

When Mike Ploog and Steve Gerber will take over the Kull series, it will undergo a title change and become *Kull the Destroyer*. Kull will also be dethroned in this story and his tales will be shortened to 15-page mini-epics. The remainder of the book will be filled with short reprint features with sword and sorcery themes.

Issue 171 of *Strange Tales* pits Brother Voodoo against Obeah and the evil Baron Samedi and there is a flashback sequence of a scene with the Baron in New Orleans. This strip, by the way, is on a monthly schedule for the summer sales period only. After the heavy selling season is over the book will revert to a bi-monthly schedule. Brother Voodoo will then embark on a two-part tale dealing with "The Cult of the Black Rooster" and we will be introduced to the supporting cast of the book in this story, after all, how's a fella gonna' get in trouble without his friends?

The Monster of Frankenstein will undergo a title change in the next couple of issues to become *The*



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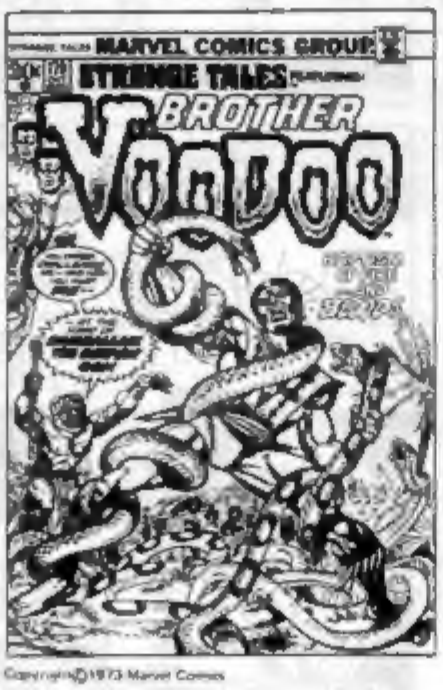

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Frankenstein Monster. Mike Ploog will no longer be handling the art for the series, however, so John Buscema and John Verpoorten will take on the art chores as the book goes on a bi-monthly basis. An interesting note is that the legal department decided the face resembled Karloff's version, so Verpoorten made the needed changes. In order to accomodate Frankenstein in his busy program, Buscema was forced to give up the task of preparing the layouts for the *Fantastic Four*. Consequently, Rich Buckler is going to do the breakdowns for the *FF*, leaving the finished pencilling and inking to Joe Sinnott.

It is a new title from Marvel, capitalizing on the current horror craze and the early 60's Googam and Rom-buu, monster books. Dick Ayers will be doing the artwork for this four-color comic, borrowing generously from the early Kirby titles. The first story will center on the origin of IT and the evil Dr. Vault. Next will come the "Living Gargoyle," then "Grog" from the La Brea Tar-pits. In the 4th and 5th stories, the "Family of Fear" makes an appearance—Goom and his son, Goo-Gam. The following tale will be "The Colossus in Hell" with Surtur and Ymir vs. Thor and It.

With issue 17, *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire* will become *Luke Cage, Powerman*, will be invested with a new burst of super-heroism and a quick course in diction in the tale

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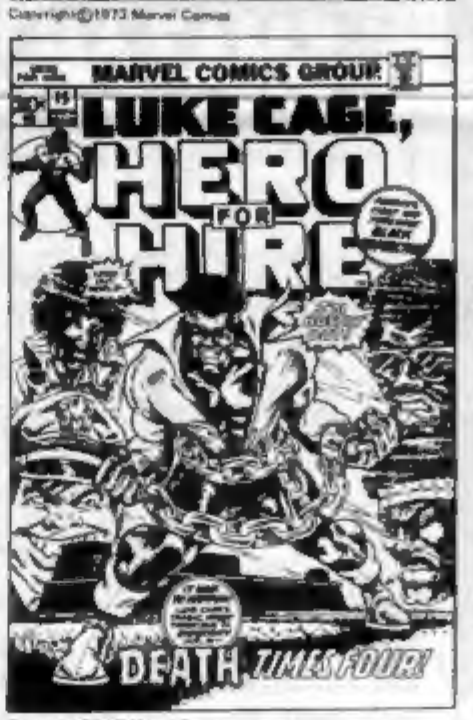

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"Rich Man, Iron Man—Powerman, Thief". Len Wein and George Tuska will produces the book from now on (well for a few months anyway), and much of Cage's jivin' slang will be eliminated. Billy Graham would like to continue to ink the series, but other committments may prevent his participation.

The early Avengers story, featuring the original Powerman, will be reprinted in *Marvel Triple Action* 15. In an upcoming Luke Cage tale, the two will meet to decide who is the real possessor of the title Powerman.

A villain named the Steeplejack is going to turn up in the *Luke Cage —Powerman* book soon and the "Return of Mace" is to take place as soon as Len Wein can find the time to do them. Len also plans to add Nighthawk to the *Defenders* lineup and have a return bout between the Defenders and the Titan Xemnu.

Stan Lee is once again working on that large *Marvel Origins* book, hoping to have it ready as a special Christmas item for bookstores and mailorder. The format and size of the book has yet to be settled, but Stan hopes to include the 30's and 40's origins of the Sub-Mariner and Human Torch, as well as the 60's origins of Spidey, Thor, The FF, The Hulk, Captain America, Daredevil, Iron Man and more. Ol' Smiley and Roy are considering writing a short introduction to each of the origin stories, giving a little insight and personal background on the creation of a Marvel character.

The hour-long Christmas special TV show that we told you about last issue is progressing nicely. All of the music has been written by Steve Lemberg, and Gerry Conway has written the first draft of the

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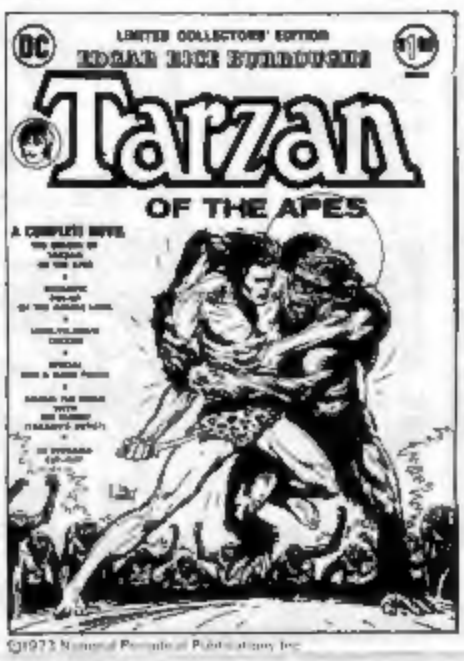
teleplay. Now all that remains is for a union writer to polish the script and the William Morris agency to see that it is handled by a reputable company.

Steve plans to make a record of the Marvel Christmas Special if the show cannot be produced in time, and has a whole bag of tricks up his sleeve. Lemberg has also put together a second Spiderman record, to be produced shortly. On this disk, Spidey sings and the whole Marvel bullpen and cast of characters are on hand for the finish. Steve by the way, wrote the theme for the Freedom Train which is touring the country right now, drumming up publicity for the rapidly approaching Bi-Centennial.

NATIONAL NEWS

Congratulations are in order for National's new vice-president, Sol Harrison. Sol has been with DC since its earliest days and has shared the responsibility for the standards and quality that has been a trademark of the National line. Working in his capacity as Production Manager, Sol has always done his best to insure the highest quality reproductions possible, as well as lending a helping hand, a critical suggestion or a friendly constructive word to many, many artists through the years.

Sol's association with comics began at Emil Strauss' Photochrome



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Engraving Co., where many of the printing plates were made for the comics of the thirties and forties. Since moving to National, he has taken over the production department, been an idea man, an unofficial art director and has had a hand in the administration and policy behind the DC line of books.

Just as he helped pioneer the process which enables the reproduction of Golden Age art from the four-color comics, and was in on the DC dollar comicline from the very beginning, Sol hopes to break new ground in the future. Among his plans are ideas that will reach beyond the contemporary range and format of comics, extending the illustrative qualities of comic art into areas and markets it has never been associated with before.

Among the first of these new formats and concepts are the dollar giants. "We just sort of sneaked the dollar *Rudolph* book out last Christmas before anyone knew what was going on, after that came the *Shazam!* title. Now we're going to try to put out two every month." This was the reply of Carmine Infantino when asked how the giant books were doing and his optimism would seem to be substantiated by good sales returns on the *Shazam!* book in particular.

Infantino, as publisher and Executive Director has great faith and enthusiasm for the books, hoping that they will prove to be a success-

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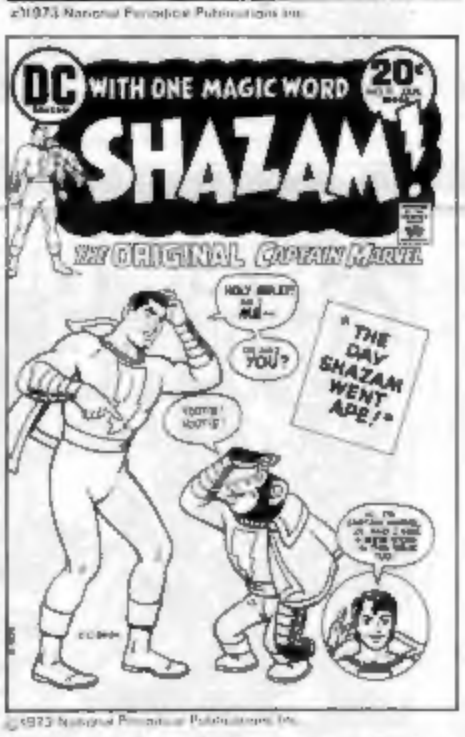

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ful breakthrough in terms of size and format. Carmine has come up with many ideas and suggestions, and sees the chances of National's continual expansion of their experimental efforts in the future looking very good.

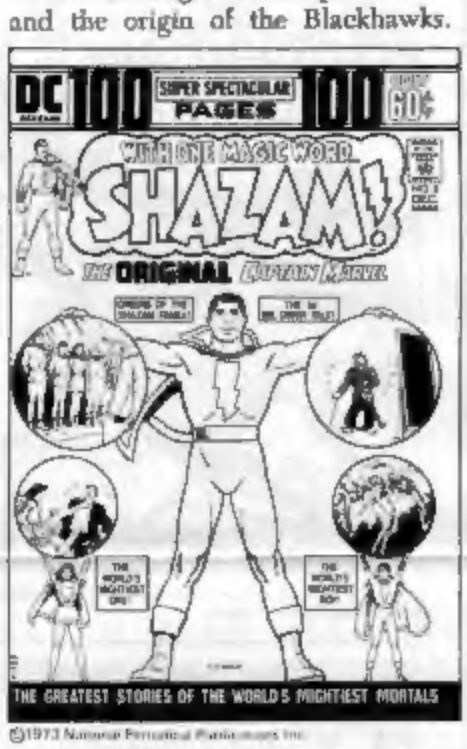
Upcoming giant collector's editions will include a *Tarzan* special. This book will reprint Joe Kubert's telling of the Tarzan saga from the first four issues. The 80-page format of the book will necessitate some slight abridgement, but the storyline will be maintained, sacrificing none of the characterization or plot. Also included in the book is a double-page by Kubert that visually explains his method of drawing the immortal Ape-Man. There are many game and puzzle pages scattered throughout, a spectacular double-page pin-up of Tarzan by Kubert, and a cut-out jungle diorama on the back cover.

Next in the dollar book line-up is a *House of Mystery* giant, with a Halloween release date, edited by Joe Orlando. This title will feature short stories reprinted from the regular comic, including a couple by Adams, Wrightson, etc. Also in the works are a romance title reprinting great classic tales of love and lost love from years gone by, a *Superman* and possibly a *Batman* special.

The basic format of these books will continue to consist of reprinted material surrounded by original covers, centerspreads, puzzles, games, dioramas, how to draw and miscellaneous filler pages.

The giant 50¢, 100-page Super-Spectaculars put out by National are also doing very well and it seems that there may be some surprises coming up in them as well. As a side note, the numbering on these books will change with the special *Shazam* issue to conform with the numbering of the series that they represent.

The E. Nelson Bridwell edited *Secret Origins* comic will reprint two classic tales in issue 6—The origin of the Legion of Super-Heroes and the origin of the Blackhawks.


100 SUPER SPECTACULAR PAGES 100
WITH ONE MAGIC WORD
SHAZAM!
THE ORIGINAL CAPTAIN MARVEL
THE GREATEST STORIES OF THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTALS

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The Blackhawk origin is of particular interest in that it was to be the beginning of one of the few Golden Age strips that did not rely on super or extraordinary powers. Created by Will Eisner and Chuck Cuidera, Blackhawk was to stand on the premise of good writing, storytelling and artwork, a premise that made it comparable in sales to the real giants of the forties.

Mary Marvel, Captain Marvel Jr. and the Marvel Family are going to be introduced in the *Shazam* book in the January, February and March releases, in new stories. Elliot Maggin has done a Captain Marvel Jr. story titled "Mystery of the Missing Newstand" with art by Dave Cockrum. Bob Oksner and E. Nelson Bridwell have done "The Thanksgiving Thieves," the first Mary Marvel story in 22 years. Bridwell has also scripted a tale tentatively titled "The Year Without Christmas," in which Aunt Minerva returns.

"The Man Who Hated Christmas" is the title of a tale written by Elliot Maggin and drawn by one of the old Captain Marvel artists, Kurt Schaf-

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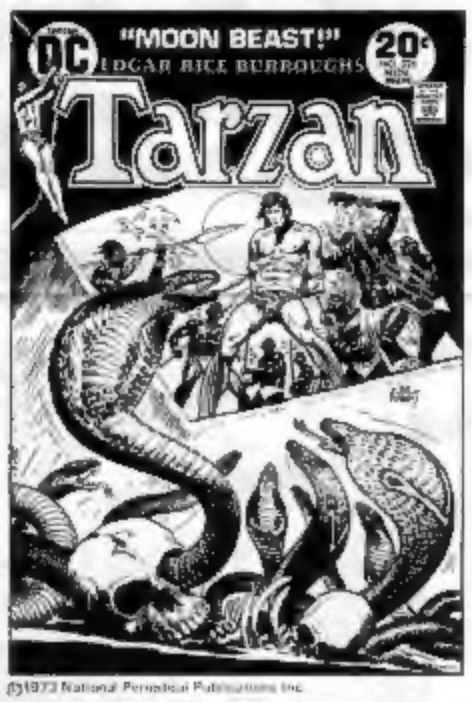

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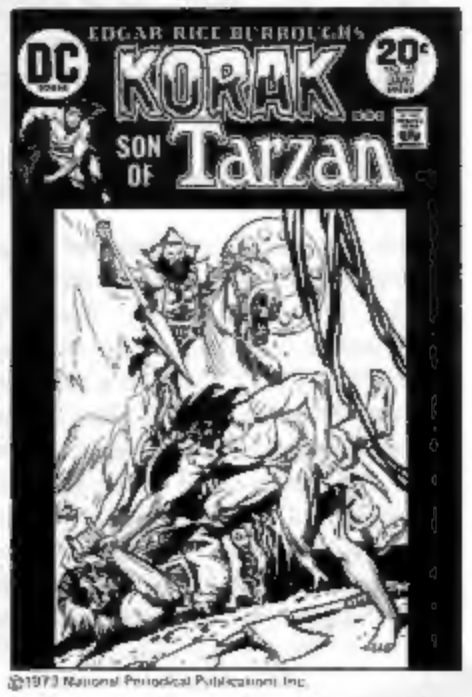

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fenburger. The tale will face the Marvel Family against the Sivana Family and marks the return of Schaffenburger to the Marvel Family fold. Kurt is enjoying his reunion with old characters after having expressed the opinion that he thought he would never even see them again, much less be called upon to draw them.

While Joe Kubert is working on

future projects, other things are happening in his *Sgt. Rock* title. Russ Heath has elected to do fewer stories, so John Severin will be pitching in three or four times a year, as will George Evans, filling in between Heath-drawn tales. This will allow Russ to pursue work in other fields (recently his work has appeared in *Gallery* and *National Lampoon*), rather than being restricted to war stories. A Kubert reprint will be featured in an upcoming issue while

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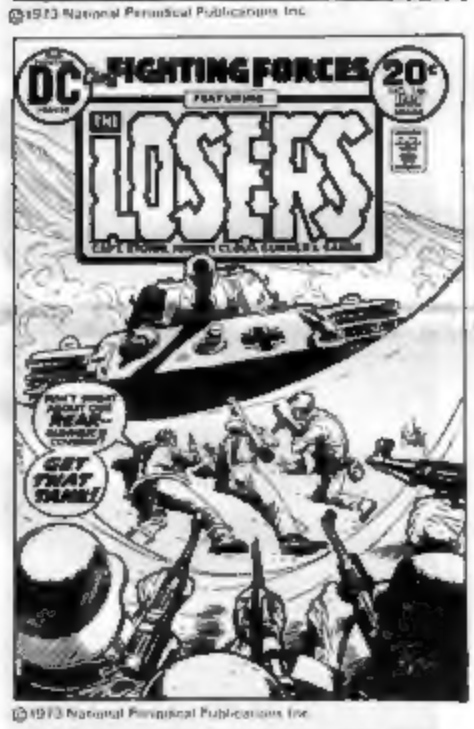

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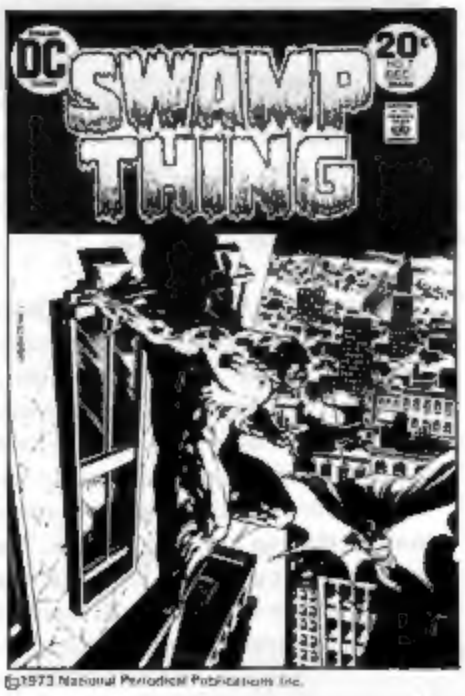

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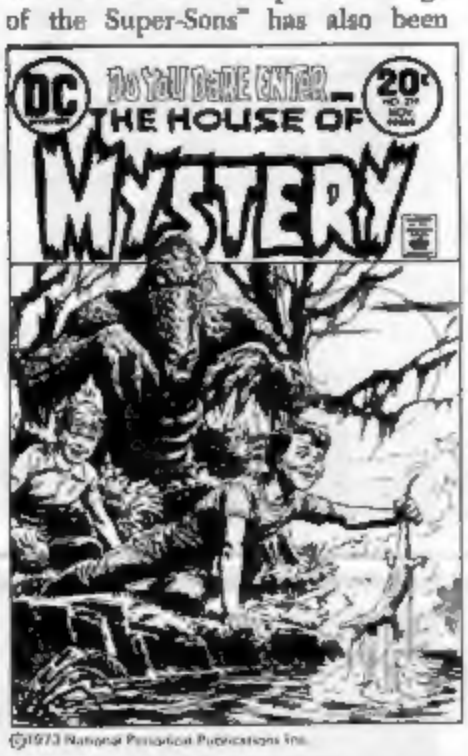
the various changeovers are taking place.

The Swamp Thing is alive (?) and well in his own little world of intrigue according to Len Wein, the series' writer. After the dramatic fight between the Swamp Thing and the Batman in issue 7, Len will continue the hulking beast's adventures in tales titled "Terror in Tunnel 13," "Stalked from Beyond" and "The Return of Arcane." With issue 10 or so, Len would like to take the Thing out of the swamps, hopping up north to see what kind of mayhem he can do there.

Following the current Quality revival in the *Justice League of America*, Len plans to write a story in which the JLA is pitted against Eclipso, in 109, and in 110 there will be a special Christmas story in which the black Green Lantern appears and the Red Tornado gets a new costume. Another group, called the Injustice Gang of America, is also in various stages of development, and it will include the presences of Kronos, The Scarecrow, Terra-Man, Sinestro, The Cheeta and Captain Cool.

Murray Boltinoff's *Legion of Super Heroes* title has proved extremely popular, and Legion fans Cary Bates (writer) and Dave Cockrum (artist) couldn't be happier. Similarly, the *World's Finest* team-up of the "Saga of the Super-Sons" has also been



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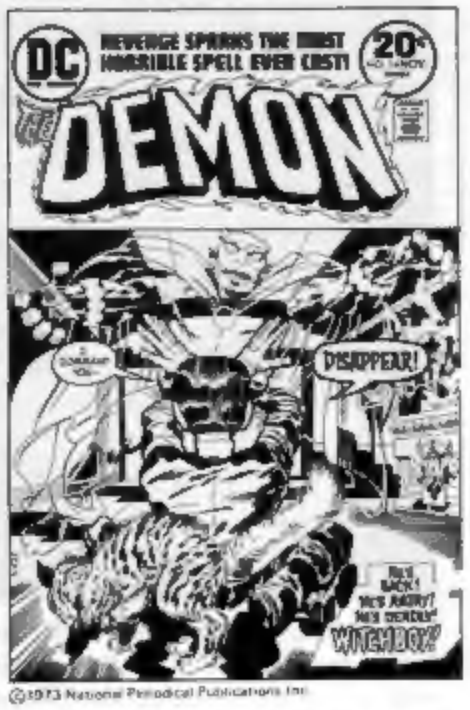

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well received, prompting Boltinoff to afford it greater consideration and frequency in the future.

Upcoming issues of the *Brave and Bold* will continue to feature Jack Kirby's characters fighting with, or against, the Batman. Issue 109 will feature an appearance by the Demon, while 110 showcases the reappearance of the Wildcat, in "A Very Special Spy". The Joker will appear in 111 in "Death has the Last Laugh," and in 112, the long requested team-up with Mr. Miracle.

Jack Kirby has some new tricks coming up in the *Demon* soon, such as the "Return of the Witch Boy" and an adventure in which a weird Doppleganger, or double, appears and begins to drain the Demon of power. The only difficulty is that while the draining is going on, the identity is also being drained from Jason Blood, and both he and the Demon are beginning to fade away.

Mr. Miracle's adventures are going to take him to a strange hotel where crooks hire the hotel people (also crooks) to kill their enemies (more crooks). The whole thing sounds pretty confusing and proves to be even more so for Scott Free, Barda and Shilo as they are mistaken for

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guests who are to be eliminated. A little surprise turns up at the end of the story too, as Jack has added in his "coming next issue" plug the cryptic words "Mr. Miracle Marries Big Barda?"

Kamandi will become involved in a multi-part sea-going tale as he becomes seperated from Ben Boxer and crashes at sea only to be rescued by Leopards. Unfortunately, they are in a galley being rowed by "slaves" who represent many of the varied animal peoples of the future. Kamandi is chained to a bench and is made to row until he can figure a way out of his latest curious predicament. Kamandi will also be taking part in the races at Hialeah, riding his insect mount Devil against an open field of horses in a race to the death. Flower's twin sister makes an appearance soon and Kamandi learns why she could speak when all the rest of the world's humans are unable to.

Julie Schwartz will take over the editorial chores on *Wonder Woman* in the very near future and Len Wein will handle the writing. No artist has been set as yet, but the decision will come soon on this book which has seen almost as many editors as it has years of existence.

The Human Target will begin donning more of his many faces in upcoming months as Len puts him through his paces in a wild west tale titled "Rodeo Riddle," a story about "The Million Dollar Methusula," "The Return of Gunther King," and a real gem as the Human Target turns up in drag to save a woman's life (no snickering, or he'll hit you with his purse).

Walt Simonson has been lettering Howie Chaykin's Iron Wolf saga lately, and Chaykin himself has been inking the strip. Chaykin has been plotting the stories, allowing the dialogue to be written by editor Denny O'Neil and has already begun work

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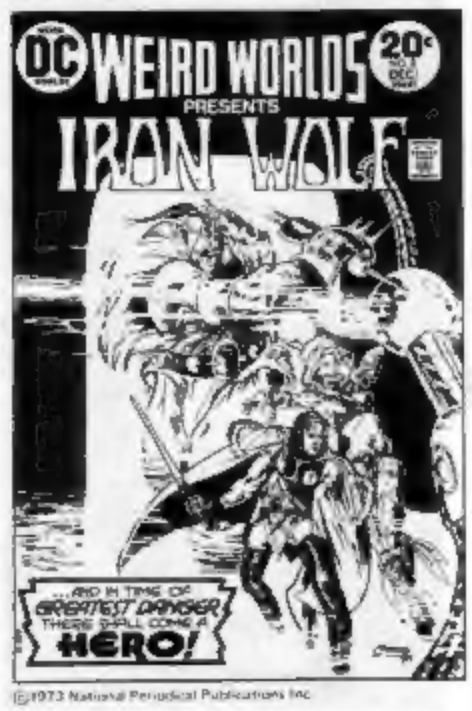

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on the second of the star-spanning, galaxy — encompassing mini-epics.

The DC offices will be moving again July 27 to 75 Rockerfeller Plaza as a result of more merging on the part of their parent company, Warner Communications. Accompanying this move will also be a tremendous new surge of ideas that are said to be so revolutionary they will surprise everybody. The general concensus at National is that they have been producing comics for 30 years and it's time for some changes to be made. There are many new concepts being bandied about that are so secretive no one dares reveal them yet. *COMIXSCENE* will release all the data as soon as this material is under way.

MEDIA SCENE

The new James Bond movie, *Live and Let Die* is now scheduled for a July release around the country. Producers Broccoli and Saltzman are so pleased with the performance of Roger Moore in the title role, they have signed him to a contract for a minimum of three more films. One of those films is to be an adaptation of *Moonraker*, and comic writer Cary Bates has submitted a story treatment which is under serious consideration after discussions in England.

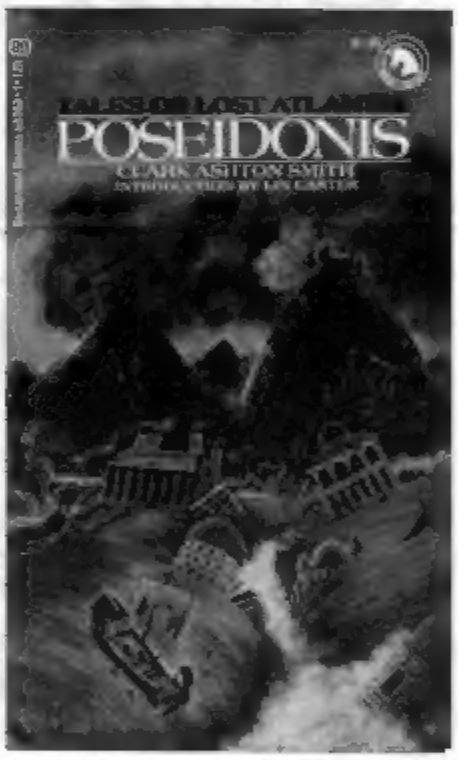
Golden Voyage of Sindbad has completed all live shooting, and Ray Harryhausen is 2/3 done with

special effects. The film is pencilled in for fall release with John Phillip Law starring as Sindbad. Frank Frazetta is among those submitting sketches for the poster work, but there is no definite word yet as to who will get the job.

Battle for the Planet of the Apes, the *last* Apes flick, opens this month around the country. The film starts with the final war that destroys humankind (with the exception of small bands of mutants) and ends with Charlton Heston's spaceship popping out of warp over the planet, bringing the cycle full circle. The film probably won't be the end of the apes, though. All five films have been sold to TV and plans are underfoot for a TV series in 1975-76.

Vincent Price's tremendously elaborate murders in such flicks as *Dr. Phibes* and *Theater of Blood* have been tremendously popular and succesful. Next in line is *Return of Dr. Death*, now filming in England. Co-starred are Peter Cushing and Robert Quarry.

George Pal has temporarily shelved plans for his *Doc Savage* film. Seems no one will back the film because of the failure (financially) of Pal's last film, *The Power*. Apparent-



ly, Pal's success with *War of the World's, The Time Machine, Destination Moon*, and a host of others has been forgotten.

A couple of new vampire movies are scheduled for late summer release. *Jonathin*, the first "anti-facist vampire movie," *"Dracula is Dead and Well and Living in London"* (from Hammer with Chris Lee); and *The Vampyre*, base of Polidori's famous novel of the folk legend. Those interested in a sneak-preview of *"Vampyre's"* story line can get a comics version of it in Marvel's *Vampire Tales* 1.

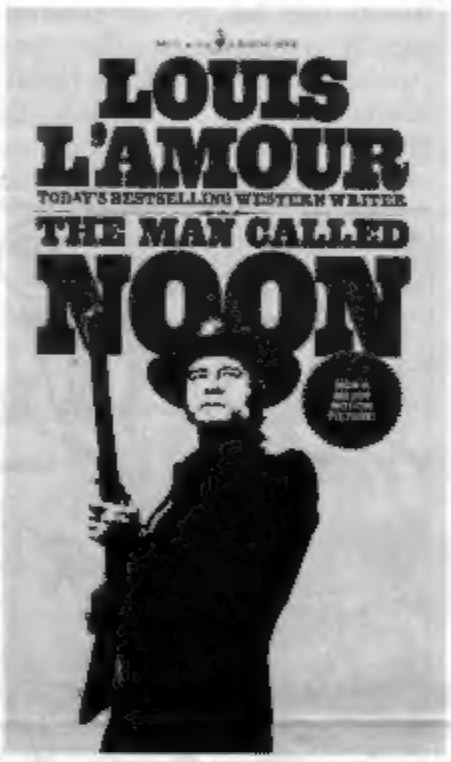
Plans are being formed for a re-filming of Dracula, in a version truer to the Bram Stoker novel. If the deal is finalized Chris Lee will star and Neal Adams will do the poster work.

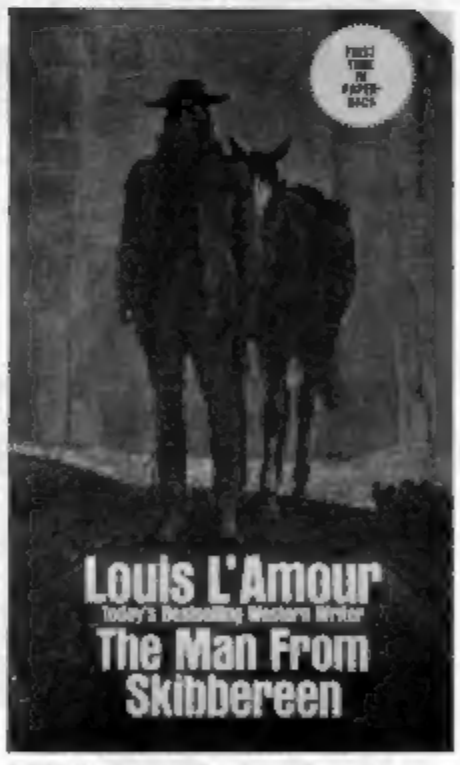
Siddhartha, a fiming of Herman Hesse's famous novel of a man's search for enlightenment has completed filming. The flick was shot in India, featuring Indian stars Shashi Kapoor and Simi Garewai, and should premeire in the states in early July.

A sequel is planned to the fabulously succesful *Poseidon Adventure*. The remaining stars from the first film have been signed and filming should start in early fall. What the plot line will be is anyone's guess.

Dune has been bought for filming by MGM, the same company that holds the rights (and a fine script by Bradbury) to *The Martian Chronicles*. Let's hope that this time they make something of it.

The sequel to the highly successful film *Dirty Harry* is now under way from Warner Brothers. Clint Eastwood will once again play the role of Harry Callahan in the film titled *Magnum Force*. Unfortunately the director that made it all work,



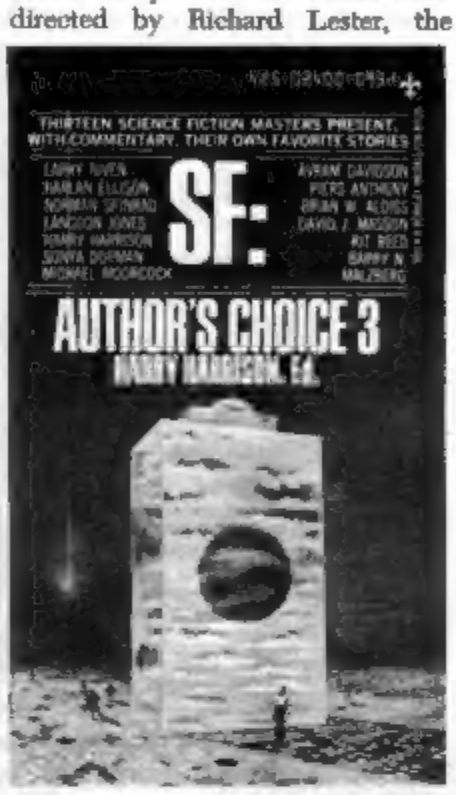


Don Siegel, will not return. He is being replaced by Ted Post, who will be trying to match the power and sales figures of his predecessor.

George Segal will star in the Warner Brother's production of Michael Crichton's *The Terminal Man* when it begins lensing after negotiations. Michael Hodges will produce and direct this film, following in the footsteps of Robert Wise, who directed Crichton's *Andromeda Strain*.

Xaviera Hollander, "The Happy Hooker" will be one happy lady, even if she can't beat the deportation rap that currently hangs over her head in Canada. The sales on her two books have brought her an unprecedented amount of recognition, not to mention money. She has a record out titled *The Happy Hooker*, writes an advice column in *Penthouse* magazine, has a new book coming out titled *Letters to the Happy Hooker*, and has apparently sold the film rights to her life story.

Billed as the "most widely read book after the Bible," *The Three Musketeers* is currently in production under the Europex banner. Produced by Alexander Salkind and directed by Richard Lester, the


THIRTEEN SCIENCE FICTION MASTERS PRESENT, WITH COMMENTARY, THEIR OWN FAVORITE STORIES
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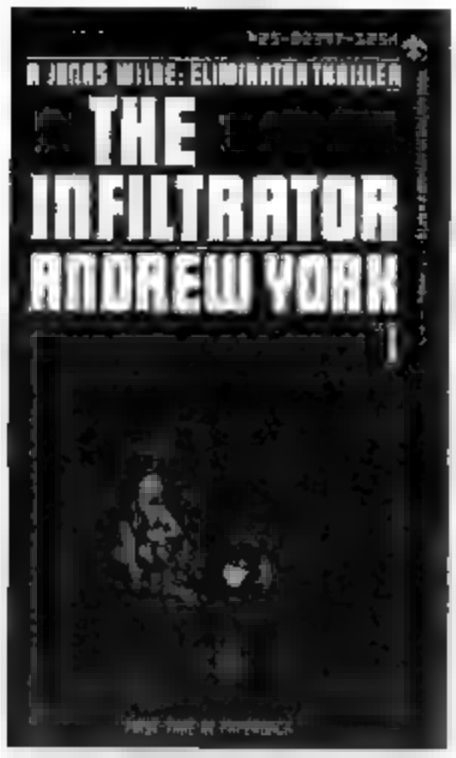
movie features an impressive cast including Charleton Heston, Raquel Welch, Christopher Lee, Faye Dunaway, Michael York and Richard Chamberlin.

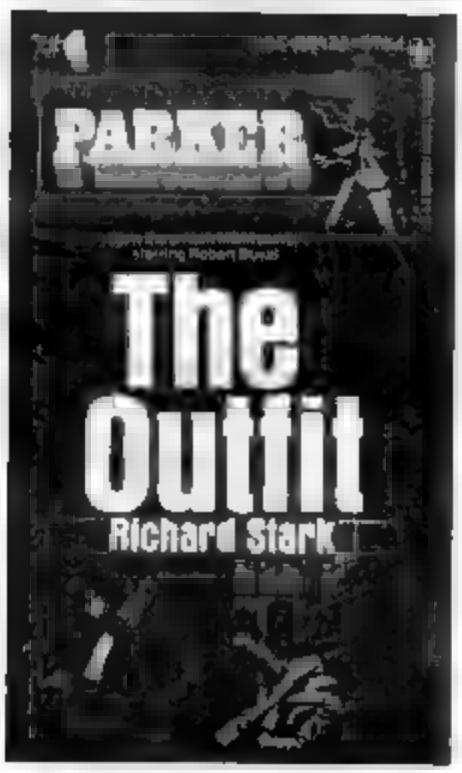
Karate-Kung Fu films have been a tremendous success in this country, and the Asians appear to be in a position to shower us with more. Bruce Lee, whose *Fists of Fury*, and *Chinese Connection* are among the most succesful of the genre has four more in the can awaiting release. The next ones out are titled *Iron Fist* and *The Hammer of God*, not to mention *Supermen Against the Orient*.

Carlo Ponti, Italian film empressario, has thrown his support behind the new wave of Karate Chop-suey movies and will be producing them as fast as he can and as long as their sales potential lasts. On his production schedule at this time are *Five Fingers of Straw, A Man Called Karate, Story of Karate and Fists and Beans* with dozens more to come. Ponti will continue to turn out his

usual film fare however, such as the recent *Flesh of Frankenstein* and *Blood of Dracula*.

The big thing in Paris film circles in mid-June was a film titled *La Grande Bouffe*, translated, thus means *The Big Feed*, and that is exactly what it is. The critics are divided in their opinion about it, some condemn it as near pornographic trash while others call it a work of art. The director, Ferreri, calls it "mainly physiological." The Cannes Festival gave it the Inter-



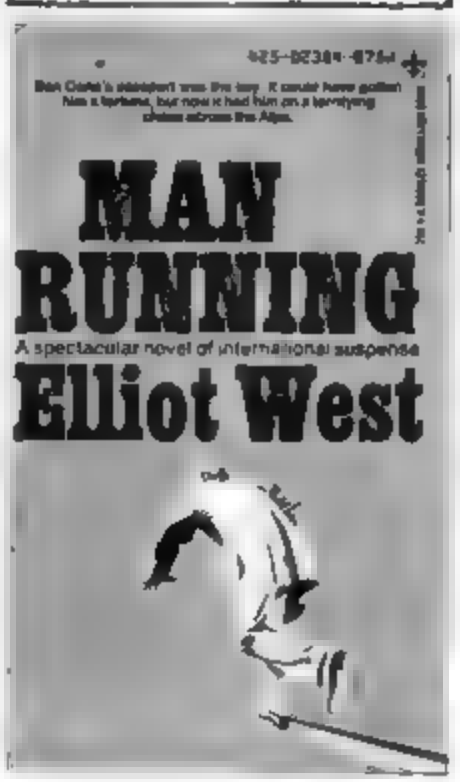


national Critics Award, A National Assembly deputy attacked the Ministry of Culture for ever letting it be produced, and the film is the box-office hit of the month. The object of this controversial film is for four men to sit down and eat themselves to death

Last Tango in Paris and its director are very much in the international news scene. Besides being condemned or praised by every critic on earth, the film has sparked so many imitations that the following titles have been registered in West Germany, making them unusable in a future rip-off venture; *The Last Tango From Rome, Vienna, Munich, Berlin* (take your pick), *The First Tango From Rome, Vienna, Munich, Berlin* (pick again) *The Butter Tango From and The Last Waltz From . . . The Last Boogie From* and *The Absolutely Last Tango From . . . !* Too bad nobody thought of *The Son of the Last Tango* or the *Revenge of the Last Tango*.

Meanwhile, the film's director Bernardo Bertolucci has been elected president of ANAC, one of Italy's two Film Director's Guilds. The only problem with this is that if Bertolucci ever sets foot in Italy he will be arrested on obscenity charges stemming from his *Last Tango*, and be sent to jail.

One of the most popular and beloved comic book characters in all of Europe, *Tintin*, is finally coming to America. United Artists plan to release a new, English-language version of *Tintin and the Lake of the Sharks*, the latest and most popular of the Tintin (pronounced Tan-tan) animated films. If the film proves successful, an earlier adventure *Tintin and the Temple of the Sun* will also be released

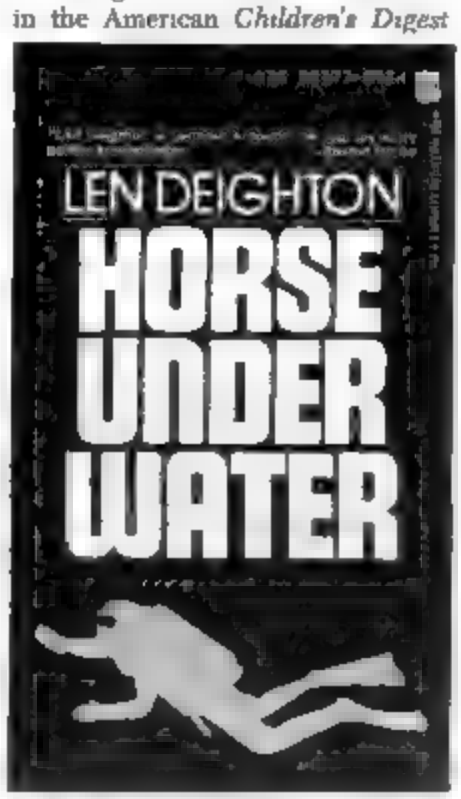


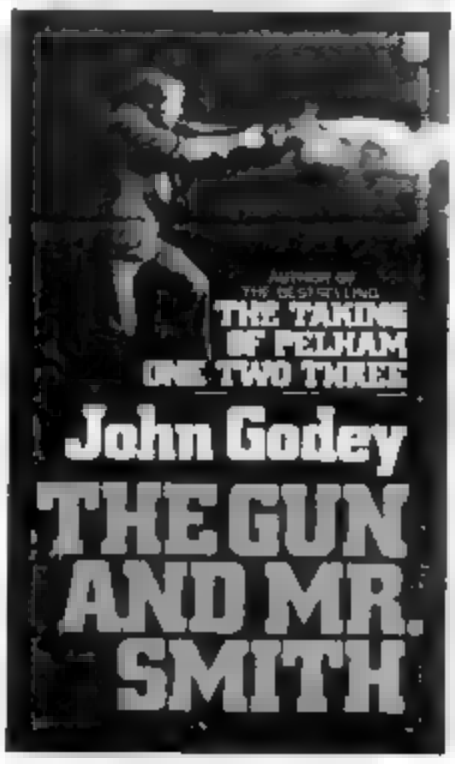
The backers of Belvision Studios have invested several million dollars in the marketing of the Tintin pictures in the United States, and have started production on a new feature length film, *Gulliver's Travels*—mixing live actors with animation. Richard Harris is scheduled to play the part of Gulliver

"Until now there has been only one studio for full-length cartoons in the world and that's Disney," says Richard Leblanc, head of Belvision, "But now there are two."

Tintin is a teenaged reporter who travels all over the world in search of adventure with his dog Milou and the slightly tipsy, Captain Haddock. The character has created a "Mickey Mouse" sort of empire in Europe which includes comic books, toys, pajamas, shoes, games and teepees. There were plans to market Tintin toilet paper, but the idea was turned down because "we'd never get the kids out of the bathroom."

Created in 1930 by the now 65-year old Belgian, Georges Remi—who uses the pen name of Herge—Tintin has appeared in 24 comic albums in 16 different languages, including the serialized adventures in the American *Children's Digest*





Overall, the Tintin albums have sold more than 35 million copies, and the first book, "Tintin in the Land of the Soviets" is now going for about $750 to serious collectors

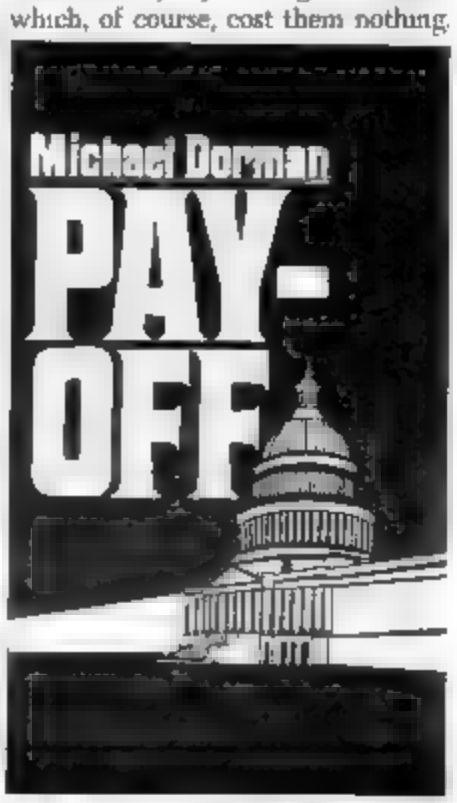
In Belgium, *The Lake of the Sharks* was the third most popular movie in 1972, right behind *The Godfather* and *A Clockwork Orange*

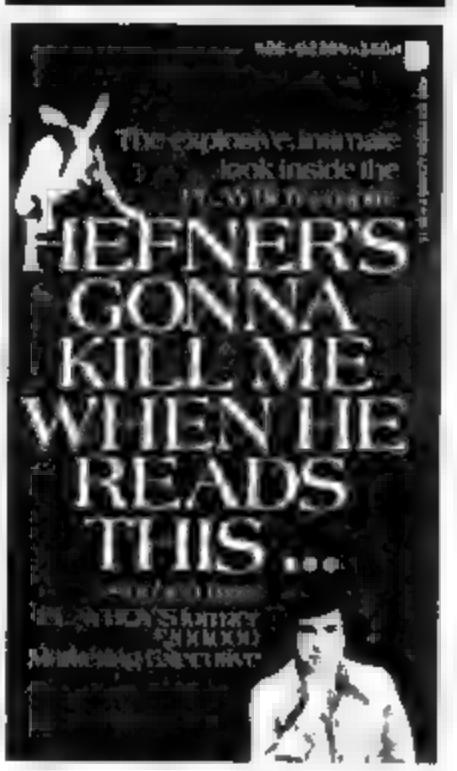
Star Trek fans have heard about the animated comeback of the crew of the starship Enterprise by now, but not all of them have jumped for joy over the possibility. Appearing for half-an hour on Saturday mornings on NBC, the voices of all the characters will be by the original cast of the "live" program. It may not be what many fans were hoping for, but it is a step in the right direction

Gene Roddenberry is producing the animated version, so chances are that the cartoon will be as close to the original *Star Trek* as possible. "We'll be able to do some things better via animation," says Roddenberry. "We can show some curious life forms in a way that we never could if we had to use real actors." The major drawback, as he sees it, is that the half hour format is a severe limitation to the stories he wants to tell

"It is," he says, "a possible step toward a revival of the live show. If the animated show works, and gets good ratings, we may make it all the way back. Meanwhile, this is a way of getting some income. I'm not getting rich on the Star Trek reruns, even though Paramount refers to them as 'our 79 jewels.'"

One of the main reasons, oddly enough, that the show has not come back is the success and fans it has acquired. Paramount is making so much money by selling the reruns which, of course, cost them nothing.





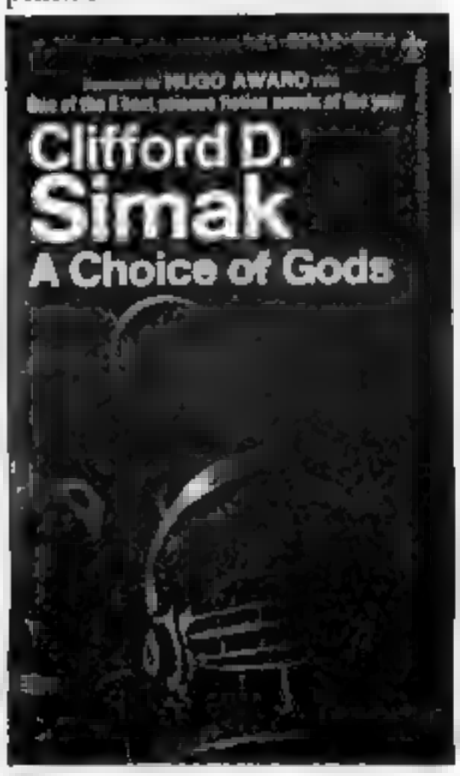
that they are unwilling to give up that income. A new live series would mean the reruns bonanza would end.

More on the new *Frankenstein*, the production is to be 4 hours long, to be shown on two consecutive evenings over NBC. Michel Sarrazan is set to star as the monster. One catch, in this version the creature is handsome, something like Hammer's *House of Fright* where Jekyll was plain and Hyde a handsome lady killer (in more ways than one). Should be interesting to see what comes of it.

Starlost is running into problems. The strike by the TV Writers Union has already held up filming of many new shows, and forced the networks

to delay their fall premieres for 2 weeks, and possibly longer. Harlan Ellison, creator/writer of *Starlost* is caught in the middle. He wants his show to make it, but he's an officer of the union and must show soldarity with their position. As things now stand, the strike must be settled by late July or *Starlost* will be dropped for this season.

Gene Roddenberry's new pilots look strong. *Genesis II* did well in the ratings and CBS has tentatively pencilled it in as a mid-season replacement. *Questor*, as yet unshown, is being considered for a berth in NBC's Wednesday Mystery Movie. The pilot, about an alien android sent to Earth to help mankind survive, will be shown in early fall.



Look for *The Shadow* to turn up as a made-for-TV movie this year. The film has been scripted and should be filmed early in the season.

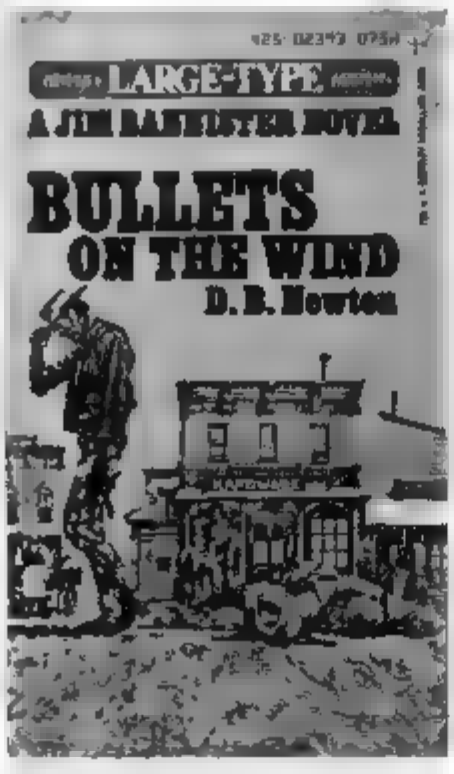
ABC is again considering their series idea on *Great Detectives*. The pilots about Nick Carter and Sherlock Holmes were successful and others are planned on Philo Vance and Nero Wolfe. The aim is do a rotating series featuring three of the characters.

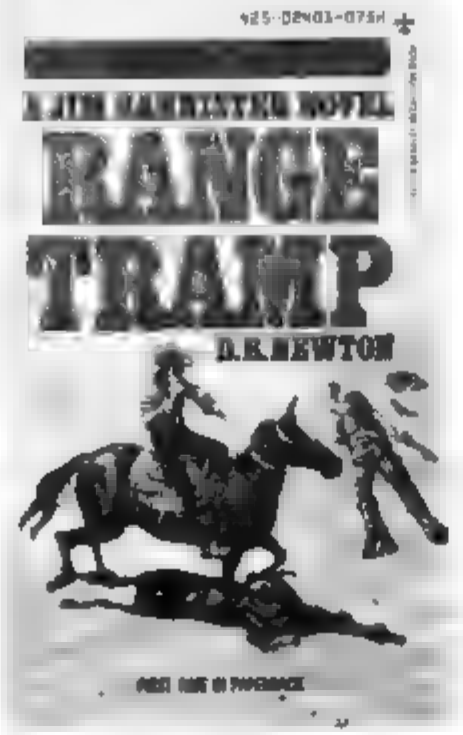
In Munich, Germany, there is a TV-film production underway to spotlight 12 of the *Great Detectives* similar in approach to the ABC idea of last year. Six of the segments are done, and more are in various stages of planning. Each show features such famous sleuths as Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Pourot and Sam Spade.

Monte Markham has been cast as the new Perry Mason. Asked how his version will compare with Raymond Burr's, Markham answered "They'll be as much alike as Monte Markham is like Raymond Burr."

Dan Curtis has wound up production work on his Yugoslavian sets for the two-hour long CBS-TV production of *Dracula* with Jack Palance in a leading role. Curtis, you might remember, produced the highly successful *Night Stalker* and *Night Strangler* for ABC-TV a few years ago in addition to his *Dark Shadows* epic.

The Hanna-Barbera adult cartoon *Wait Till Your Father Gets Home* will be returning this fall with a new policy of guest-starring the cartoon caricatures of famous TV and film





personalities including Don Knotts, Monty Hall, Phyllis Diller and others. This type of practice was found successful on the *Flintstones* and Hanna-Barbera hopes to succeed with it again.

The Screen Cartoonists Local 839 in Hollywood has signed a new three-year pact with Animated Film Producers Inc. that will result in a cumulative 80 cent an hour raise on animated film work. The possibilities of a strike were warded off by the long running Writer's Guild of America West strike currently in progress. The union officials were not particularly pleased with the settlement, but realize that they must put up with a great deal of business ignorance on the part of their members.

Alex Toth is currently in Australia for three months, working at Hanna Barbera's studios in that continent. Toth, incidently, was involved in a *Shadow* TV production years ago for which he made a number of presentations. For some reason the deal fell through and it was forgotten about. All this took place long before National Periodical's acquiring of the Shadow and their sending the script to Alex for consideration.

Nostalgic old time radio has gone big time. Many stations all over the country have been playing old radio shows, to great success. In New York, a cable TV station has begun broadcasting radio shows over a single color photo which stays on the screen throughout the half-hour.

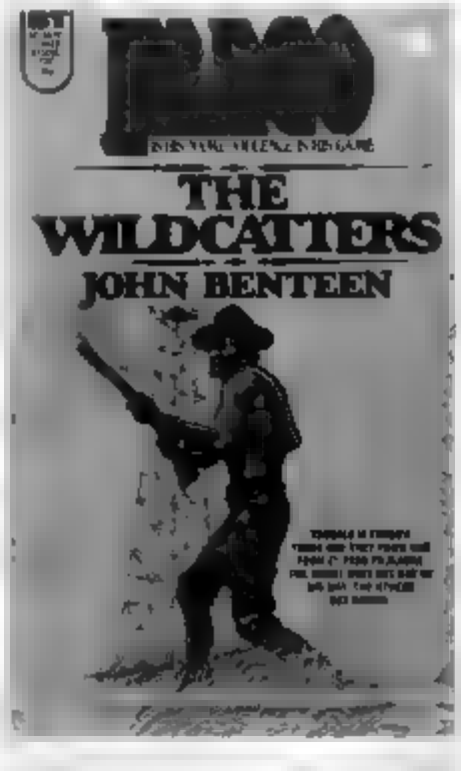
One old show, *X Minus One*, will be revived on the NBC radio network Saturday nights. The shows are taken from s-f stories that appeared in *Galaxy Magazine* and are worth listening to.

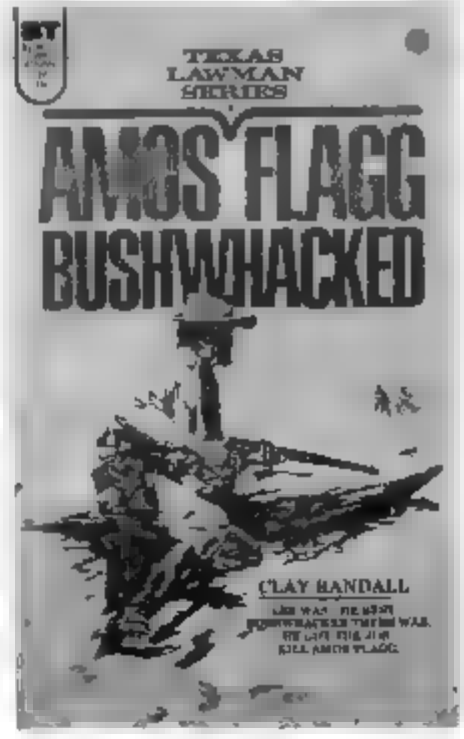
Coupled with the new interest in old radio is a crackdown on dealers selling tapes of shows without legal permission. Literally scores of law suits have been filed and more will come.

Meanwhile, Nostalgia Records has *legally* put out a series of recordings (LP records) of old radio. Each disk has two half hour shows and overall recording quality is excellent. Now available are *The Shadow* (two adventures featuring Orson Welles), *Suspense* and *Inner Sanctum*, *Fibber McGee and Molly* and *Henry Aldrich*. More are to follow.

Also available for the first time, a series of new, high quality recordings of old movie themes. RCA Red Label is inaugurating a new series featuring great movie composers. The first and second are already available. One, *The Sea Hawk and Others* features the work of Wolfgang Korngald who scored many of Errol Flynn's great action film. The other *Now, Voyager*, is the first of five projected records on Max Steiner and includes his masterful score for *King Kong*.

The recording industry may be in for some hard times in the next few years as the petroleum industry runs out of chloride-polyvinylacetate, the stuff that makes records black. The





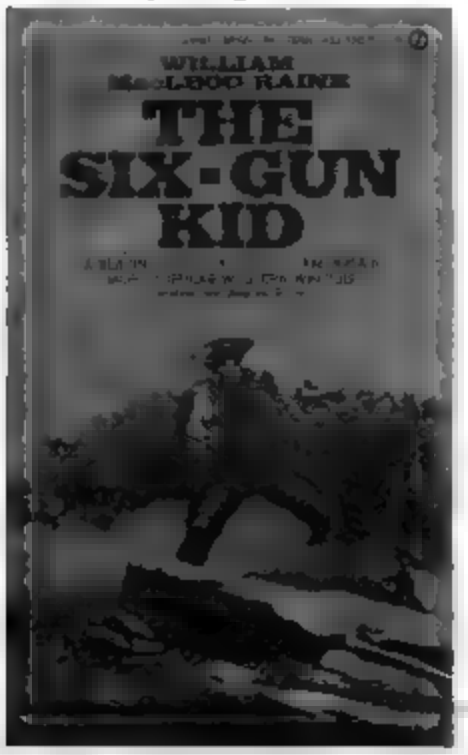
companies are currently buying up all they can get their hands on, but you can look forward to red, green, blue or rainbow colored albums, but no black.

Frank Frazetta has been approached to do cartoons for OUI magazine. Frank is currently up to his neck in pb covers having completed five S&S jobs for Dell and 5 new Burroughs jobs for Ace and Doubleday. He has also been considered to do some new Conan covers for Marvel's *Savage Tales*.

Neal Adams is grinding out volumes of material for the comics since the closing of *WARP*. His Conan story is completely pencilled and awaits inks, two covers, for

Dracula Lives and *Monsters Unleashed* are turned in and more are to follow. Neal has also finished another "Son 'o God" for *National Lampoon* with more to follow. Also of interest to comic fans is a series of color designs for the projected Superman Amusement Park in Metropolis, Ill. Neal has designed both the overall park and a number of rides and attractions, the drawings are on display in the Metropolis museum, now open to the public.

Archie Comics is coming out with a line of adventure titles. Edited and (mainly) drawn by Gray Morrow. The first title will be *Tales of Sorcery* (retitled from *Sabrina's Tales of Sorcery*) and will feature two new stories by Gray. Also to come is a b&w of the same title. Covers will be by Gray along with the lead



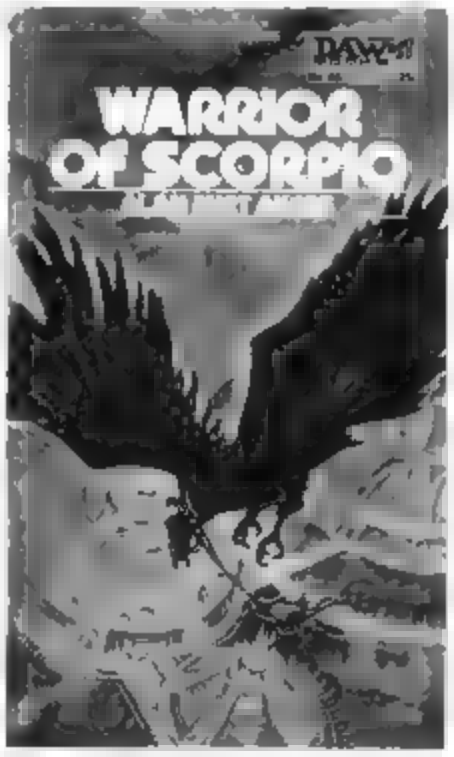
story, however, the publishers want to use material on hand and house artists for the rest of the book, and Gray fears the "Archie" look will frighten off buyers. In any case, the first issue goes on sale in August and will be available bi-monthly.

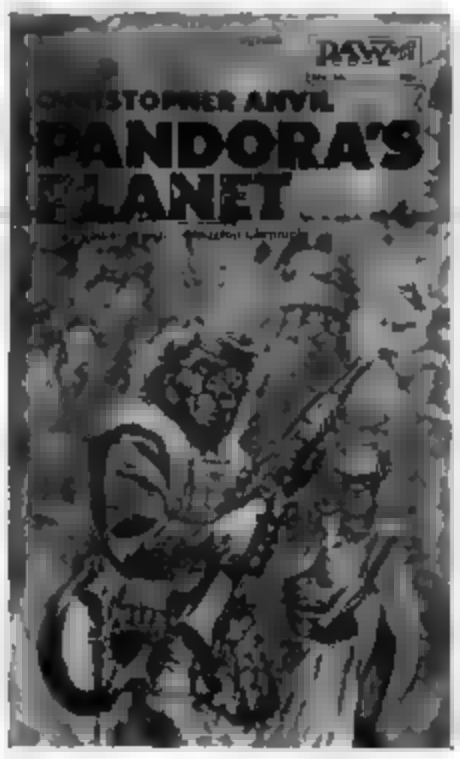
Esteban Maroto has now cleared up all problems in his homeland. He has severed all former ties and will work exclusively for Marvel. Esteban will do "Red Sonja," "Satana" and a planned cover a month.

Ralph Reese is inking a new Gil Kane epic for Marvel. Story is titled "Birthright" and will be one of Kane's best since "Valley of the Worm." Ralph has also done a day glo poster on Watergate, look for it in your friendly neighborhood head shop.

Mike Kaluta and Steve Skeates had a "Spawn of Frankenstein" story turned down by National. Seems there were too many elves, gnomes, fairies, etc. in the job for Orlando's liking. Job will now appear in an underground or fanzine.

Speaking of undergrounds, *Big Apple Comix* is in the final stages of production. Published by long-time Marvel staffer Flo Steinberg, *Big Apple* will feature work by Wally





Wood, Al Williamson, Ralph Reese, Walt Simonson and a host of others. Look for the finished product in August.

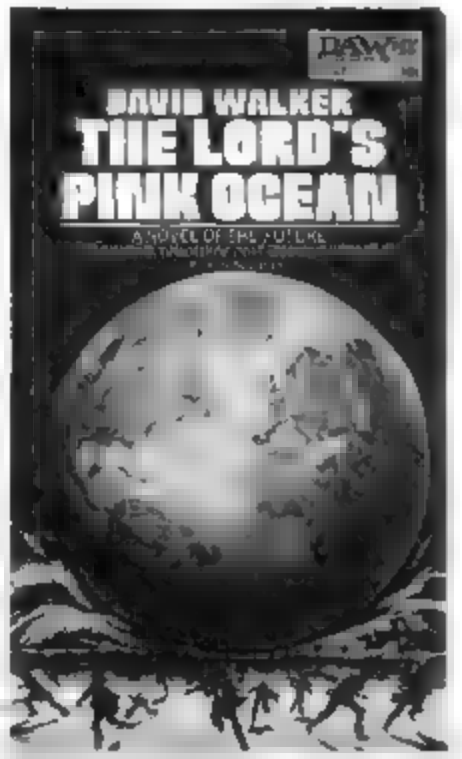
Like something out of an old Steve McQueen movie, the *Blob* came to Garland, Texas in late May and seems to have died as mysteriously as it appeared. Described as a "black mucus membrane, with red dish thick bubbles on top, it turns colors when punctured and when the bubbles burst it appears to be bleeding red and purple on the inside."

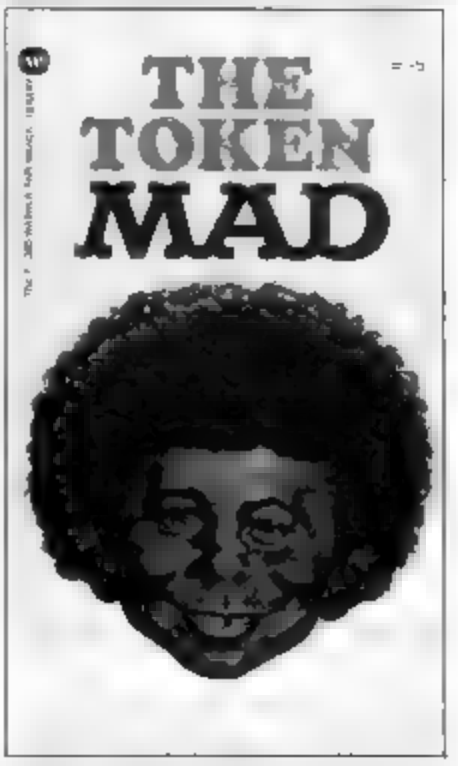
The *Blob*, while it lived, was a growing, pulsating, multiplying organism that seemed to thrive on being drowned and cut apart. It is believed to be some sort of bacterial growth created from a mixture of organic lawn substances and the rain that fell in the area at the time. Whatever it was, it died a natural death in the fresh air and sunshine of Texas, leaving many people glancing curiously over their should

ers at their Vigoro-enriched lawns.

Mystery writer John Creasey, one of the world's most prolific authors, died June 9 after suffering a heart attack that confined him to bed for nearly three weeks. Creasey, the creator of the famous *Toff*, *Baron*, and *Inspector Gideon of Scotland Yard* series, wrote some 560 books and had a number of his novels produced as movies, but only after he had collected 743 rejection slips from various companies unwilling to give him a start. He was 64 when he died and had successfully worked his way up from poverty by writing a minimum of 6,000 words a day, every day, and selling over 60 million copies of his books in 23 languages.

Frank Kelly Freas, the artist well known to science-fiction and comic



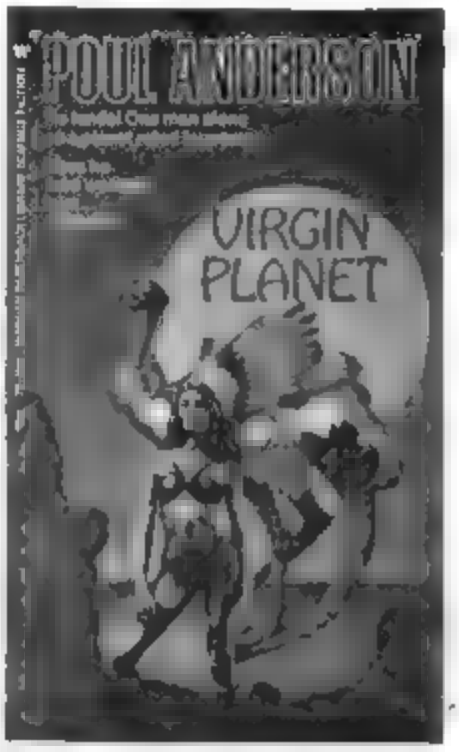


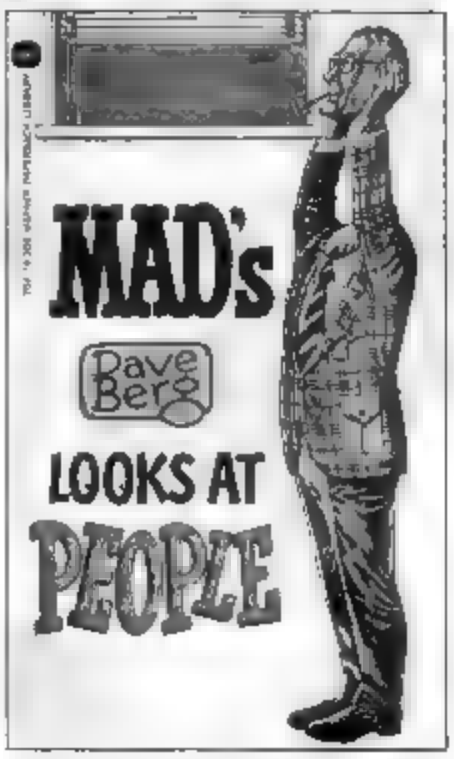
fans has added another major accomplishment to his list of impressive works. Frank designed the Skylab patch worn by the astronauts and crew working on the orbital space-station.

With this issue of *COMIXSCENE* our coverage of paperback events takes on a new, broader look, thanks to the enthusiastic response from the publishing companies to the format, design and presentation of our publication.

BALLANTINE paperback releases for the month of July will include *Poseidonis* by Clark Ashton Smith, *Right-Handed Wilderness* by Robert Wells and *The Best Science Fiction of the Year* edited by Terry Carr. August releases will include Anne McCaffrey's first new novel in two years, *To Rule The Pegasus*, a tale that tells of a very special group of people blessed with an extra talent, sense or ability that makes them outcasts in the world. The story of their life and destiny in a parapsychic research and training center is the basis of this group known as the Wild Talents.

The other science fiction title to be published in August is *Excalibur* by Sanders Anne Laubenthal, an





epic tale that continues the story of the magic sword, Excalibur, and furthers the legend of the family of Arthur Pendragon.

BANTAM Books will be releasing *Star Trek 9* this July, written by James Blish as well as the 74th Doc Savage novel *The Derrick Devil*. This brings the Doc Savage series up to the eight million mark. The Ian Fleming novel *Live and Let Die* is being released in July to tie in with the release of the United Artists picture starring Roger Moore. A similar movie tie-in is being made with the collection of EC tales titled the *Vault of Horror*, a direct sequel to the earlier collection by Jack Oleck titled *Tales From The Crypt*.

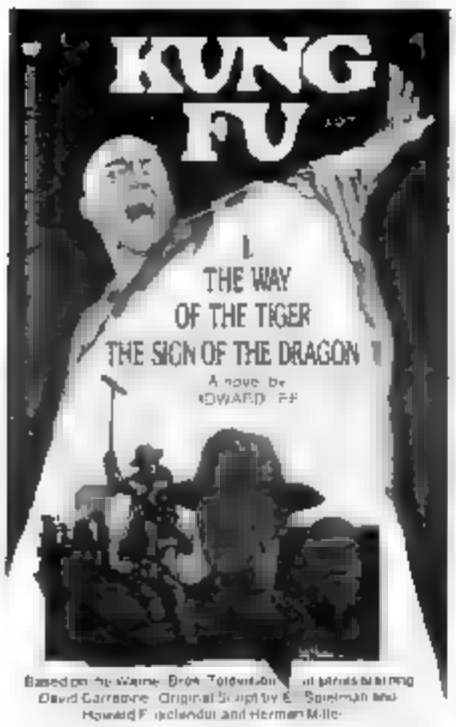
August books from Bantam will include a new Nero Wolfe mystery titled *Gambit The Breast* by Philip Roth, *God Drives a Flying Saucer* by Robert L. Dione, and *The Looomaniacs*, a breathless, shocking, torrid novel of Hollywood by the undisputed first lady of Hollywood,

Rona Barrett

Bantam is preparing to launch a big sales campaign spotlighting the western novels of Louis L'Amour today's bestselling western writer The advertising will focus on L'Amour's considerable ability to weave western tales and tell stories and will be timed to tie-in with the National General film of *The Man Called Noon*, starring Richard Crenna, Stephen Boyd and Farley Granger *COMIXSCENE* will give this top-selling author full coverage in the near future

BERKLEY books will be publishing a host of new books in July including *The 6th Annual Best SF* edited by Harry Harrison and Brian W. Aldiss, *Man Running* by Elliot West, *The Gun and Mr Smith* by John Godey and *Master Da V* by Kit Reed.

August releases to look for will include *Saturday's American* by *Semi-Tough* author Dan Jenkins *The Night is a Time for Listening*, a spy novel by Elliot West, *The Destruction Committee* by William J. Coughlin, *The Overman Culture* by Edmund Cooper, *S.F Author's Choice* edited by Harry Harrison,



and *The Fifth House* by John Godey. Another title coming out that month is the Playboy expose, *Hefner's Gonna Kill Me When He Reads This . . .* by Stephen Byer

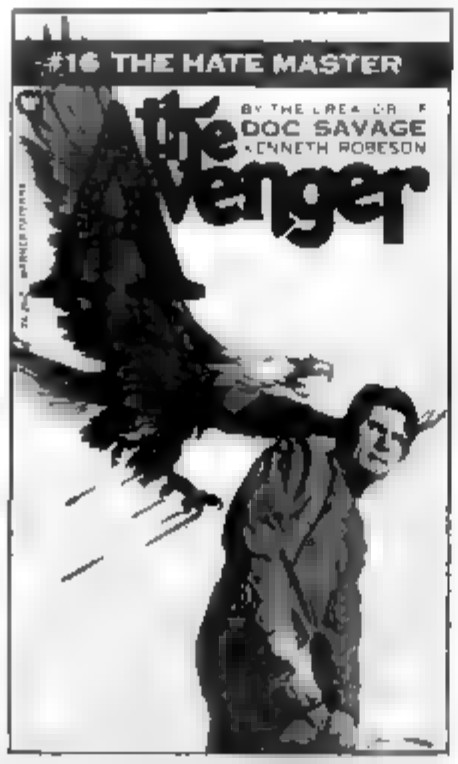
September titles from Berkley are *Payoff*, a Mafia book by Michael Dorman, *The Clay Assassin* by John Godey, *The Choice of Gods* by Clifford D Simak, *The High Destiny* by Dan Morgan, *The Red House* by Derek Lambert, *The Judas House* by D B Newton and the fourth in the *Parker* series of novels entitled *The Outfit* by Richard Stark, soon to be an MGM movie

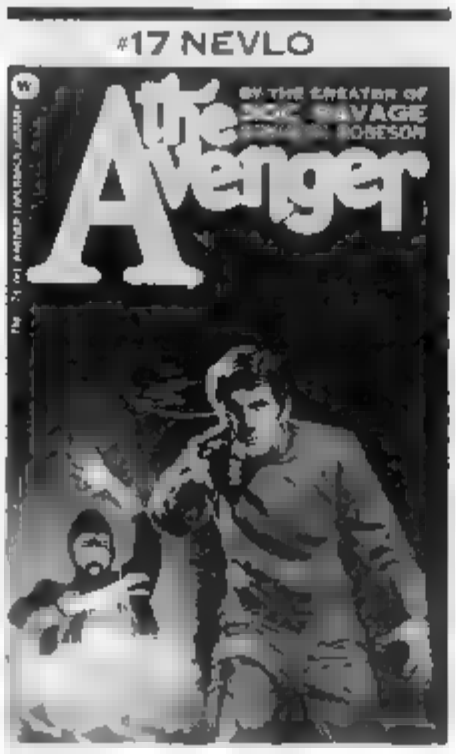
Berkley is going to be issuing *The New Earth Catalog* soon, a sequel to *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* They are also going to be publishing the Playboy Press book *Getting Into Deep Throat* in its paperback edition, complete with a full-color insert, exclusive photos, script excerpts, interviews and excerpts from the headline-making court battles.

There will be a new series coming in the September batch of books from Berkley, The Eliminator. His real name is Jonas Wilde and he is "the most dangerous man in the world." He kills with his bare hands. His employer is the top-secret Elimination Section, in charge of destroying Britain's most dangerous enemies. The title of the Eliminator's first adventure is *The Infiltrator*

BELMONT TOWER books is going to be issuing in August: *A Graveyard To Let* by Carter Dickson, *Dutch Schultz* by Ted Addy The Lady From Lust in *South of the Bordello* by Rod Gray, *The Case of the Beautiful Body* by Jonathan Craig. The Buffalo Hunter in *Hell hole*, Fargo in *The Wilderness*, Lassiter in *Gunfight at Ringo Junction* and Amos Flagg in two western novels by Clay Randall titled *Bushwhacked* and *Showdown*

The fourth adventure in the best





selling Marksman series is scheduled for August, aiming for the most hair raising, anti Mafia action yet. This time, Phillip Magellan heads for Chicago where the mob is gathered to install a crooked Congressman in the White House. With a puppet President running the country, the Mafia would be in complete control Only Magellan, with his deadly accuracy, can prevent the take-over of the entire nation. *Mafia Wipe-Out* is the title of this intriguing novel written by Frank Scarpetta

SIGNET paperbacks is coming out with a new Ed McBain 87th Precinct Mystery titled *Sadie When She Died* as well as a Carter Brown adventure, *Manhattan Cowboy*. *The Lucifer Society* is a collection of short tales of horror and the macabre by such writers as C. S. Forest er, John Steinbeck, William Burroughs and Raymond Chandler, edited by Peter Haining. In their western line, Signet releases will include *Sons of the Saddle*, *The Six Gun Kid*, *Powder Smoke Feud* and *Clattering Hooves* by William MacLeod Raine, and *Scarlet Plume* by Fredrick Manfred

DAW's science fiction line-up in August will include *Pandora's Planet* by Christopher Anvil, *The Lord's Pink Ocean* by David Walker and *Starmaster's Gambit* by Gerard Klein

The *Warrior of Scorpio* is a DAW book to be released in August and continuing the adventures of Dray Prescot of Antares. In the four months since *Transit of Scorpio* the first book of the series appeared, DAW has received rave letters concerning this series written in the Edgar Rice Burroughs tradition of interplanetary adventure and romantic intrigue. There are six interior drawings in *Warrior*, which is written by a famous British author using the pen name Alan Burt Akers.

The WARNER PAPERBACK LIBRARY is following up on their successful edition of *Xaviera* by issuing *Letters to the Happy Hooker*, personally selected by Xaviera Hollander. To be released in July, this is just one of many new titles for that month. Other July books will include *Mad's Dave Berg Looks at People*, written and illustrated by the man in the title The 15th in the Avenger series, *House of Death* by Kenneth Robeson, *Tenderfoot* by Max Brand writing as Evan Evans, *The House of Mystery 2* by Jack Oleck, *Cap'n Fatso* by Daniel V S Gallery, number 9 in the Coxeman series, *The Man Eater* by Trov Conway, and a movie tie-in of *O Lucky Man* by Barry Malzberg from a screenplay by David Sherwin

In September, Warner will be releasing Ed McMahon's *Slimming Down; The Astrologer* by John Cameron, number 16 in the Avenger series, *The Hate Master*, by Kenneth Robeson, *Roving Mail* by the editors of Mad, *Montana Rides* by Max Brand, and a novel soon to become a major motion picture, *Umbrella Steps* by Julie Gilbert

For October, Warner has planned a special *Kung Fu* paperback by Howard Lee titled *The Way of the Tiger, The Sign of the Dragon* to tie in with the popular TV series. Warner will be coordinating the merchandising and handling of the *Kung Fu* series with ABC. There will be major trade and consumer promotion and point of sale materials, including counter displays.

WPBL's *Kung Fu* coup is sure to mean big, steady profits to booksellers. Each book will contain a glossary of *Kung Fu* terms and, beginning with number 2, a prologue offering information about the philosophy of Kung Fu

Also appearing from Warner in October will be *Carmela* by Paul Gillette, a Jolson Biography aptly titled *Jolson* by Michael Freedland *The Token Mad* by the editors of Mad *A Mad Look At Old Movies* by Dick De Bartolo, *Outlaw Valley* and *Silvertip* by Max Brand, *Virgin Planet* by Poul Anderson, Coxeman 11, *It's What's Up Front That Counts* by Troy Conway; and the 17th in the Avenger series by Kenneth Robeson, *Nevlo*. Warner has a great deal of faith in this Avenger series, billing it as "The Red Hot Sales Producer of the 70's." The sales figures continue to mount month after month. In January, the

cover price on the books will increase to 95 cents per copy and by May 1974 all 24 Avenger adventures will have been published, each selling in the neighborhood of 600,000 copies each

In November, Raymond T. McNally and Radu Florescu's *In Search of Dracula* will be a Warner paperback, brimming with photos and art. This is a true history of Dracula, dating from the Rumanian Prince in the 15th Century to the current TV and movie stars. Also in the same month, look out for M P Shiel's *Purple Cloud* and in December E. C. Tubb's *S T A R Flight*

In early 1974. WPBL will begin publication of a series of *Judge Dee* mysteries by Robert van Gulik about a Chinese detective in 12th century China.

Future issues of *COMIXSCENE* will carry even more extensive coverage of the movie, TV and paperback scenes with the spotlight next issue on CRIME AND VIOLENCE in all the media. Plans at this time call for the possibility of an All-Western issue and a special surprise that all comic and literature fans in general will want to read

CINEMASCENE

In this issue of COMIXSCENE we initiate a new department of news, spotlighting the world of films. We call it Cinemascene, and in this special section we will showcase the latest happenings nationally and around the world which are slated to be shown on the motion picture screen. All of the projected productions, all the films in progress, all the latest trends and developments in the movie field will be explored and presented to our readers as they happen. This time around we are featuring 20th Century Fox and some of their upcoming productions, and in the future will give similar text and visual treatment to Warner Brothers, United Artists, Paramount and Universal. In addition to the straight movie news, we'll feature up-to-the-moment tie-ins and promotional campaigns which may not be seen elsewhere.

If Cinemascene should prove as successful as we believe it will be, the feature will be given extended coverage to the fields of animation, foreign films, TV, documentarys and specials. At your response, COMIXSCENE will continue to feature the kind of material that will make this publication the experimental, innovative and exciting magazine that you have asked for. For now, peruse this latest issue's addition and let us know what you think of it. We hope that you like it as much as we enjoyed getting it together for you

FRENCH CONNECTION II

The incredible saga of the Academy Award winning "French Connection" continues as the scene moves from New York to France. Popeye Doyle teams up with his French counterpart to track down the narcotics mastermind who escaped last time, and arrive at a new and even more dramatic "connection."

A Philip D'Antoni Production • "French Connection II" • Produced by Philip D'Antoni & Raymond Danon • Screenplay by James Poe • Based upon characters created by Robin Moore • Starring Gene Hackman/Jean Paul Belmondo

THE WALTER SYNDROME

To the lilting tune of mounting terror, you are invited to guess the strange and terrible secret of The Walter Syndrome. The beautiful actress, the gay divorcee, the sexy landlady, and the passionate secretary were all victims who *did*.

Irwin Allen's Production of • "The Walter Syndrome" • Produced by Irwin Allen • Screenplay by Richard Neely, based on his novel • Starring Gene Hackman

LIZZIE BORDEN

Lizzie Borden, as American as apple pie, but a bit more deadly. Or so her accusers claimed back in 1892 when Lizzie was tried for the grisly ax murder of her folks. Though Lizzie was finally acquitted, she became the dramatic object of local fear all the rest of her strange and fascinating life

A Robert Mulligan Production • "Lizzie Borden" • Produced by Robert Mulligan and David Lange • Directed by Robert Mulligan • Written by David Lange

8TH WONDER OF THE WORLD

A blind jazz pianist happily regains his sight with an eye transplant. Except his new eyes keep flashing their previous owner's last image...a murder. And the chase begins. From a deep-sea knife fight, to a gun battle in parachutes, to colorful Acapulco. Some guys will stop at nothing to stay alive.

A Chenault Production • "8th Wonder Of The World" • Written, Produced and Directed by Ernest Lehman

ZARDOZ

On a planet called the Vortex, they've found the startling secret of eternal life! But like many life solutions, it's become a mixed blessing. An inter-planetary invasion by the Brutals offers another kind of solution, equally mixed but no less startling.

"Zardoz" • Written, Produced and Directed by John Boorman

JOURNEY OF THE OCEANAUTS

The time is future-time 1991. And the place beneath the Pacific Ocean. Four men ~~are~~ turned into "menfish" by lung surgery ~~undergo~~ take an incredible journey from California across the sea floor to Japan...on foot

An Arthur P. Jacobs Production of • "Journey Of The Oceanauts" • Produced by Arthur P. Jacobs • Directed by J. Lee Thompson and Doug Trumbull • Screenplay by Ben Maddow and Mayo Somon • Based on the novel by Louis Wolfe

SNAKE IN THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

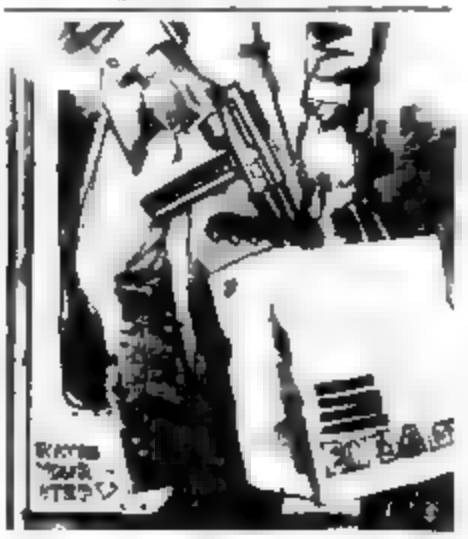
A tense tale of terror among the beautiful people. Gabriel Monson, "accidentally" pushed to his death by his friends, is reincarnated as a cobra and returns to seek suitable justice. A gripping revenge thriller in the grand tradition with a strange, unusual twist

Irwin Allen's Production of • "Snake In The Gingerbread House" • Produced by Irwin Allen • Screenplay by Henry Farrell • Story by Laird Koenig

THE SEVEN-UPS

"I want you to cement every hood you can. And I don't care how you do it." So starts the dramatic briefing to a newly-formed flying squad of super-cops. Capping the action is a gun battle at the historic site of other memorable clashes, New York's Shea Stadium.

A Philip D'Antoni Production • "The Seven-Ups" • Produced and Directed by Philip D'Antoni • Screenplay by Albert Ruben and Alex Jacobs • Story by Philip Hersh • Starring Roy Scheider



THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN

It's late at night. A man boards a city bus, pays his fare, sits down in the rear, removes a submachine gun from a shopping bag, and kills all eight passengers aboard. Senseless mass slaughter? Or are all eight victims mysteriously linked? You guessed it

"The Laughing Policeman" • Produced and Directed by Stuart Rosenberg • Screenplay by Tom Rickman • From the novel by Per Wahloo and Maj Sjowall

GORDON'S WAR

If you're looking for the steepest odds in town, try one man against the mob. A black Vietnam veteran returns to find his wife killed by the syndicate, and declares war again. his own war and his own rules.

A Palomar Pictures International Production • "Gordon's War" • Executive Producer Edgar J. Scherick • Produced by Robert Schaffel • Directed by Ossie Davis • Written by Ed Spielman and Howard Friedlander

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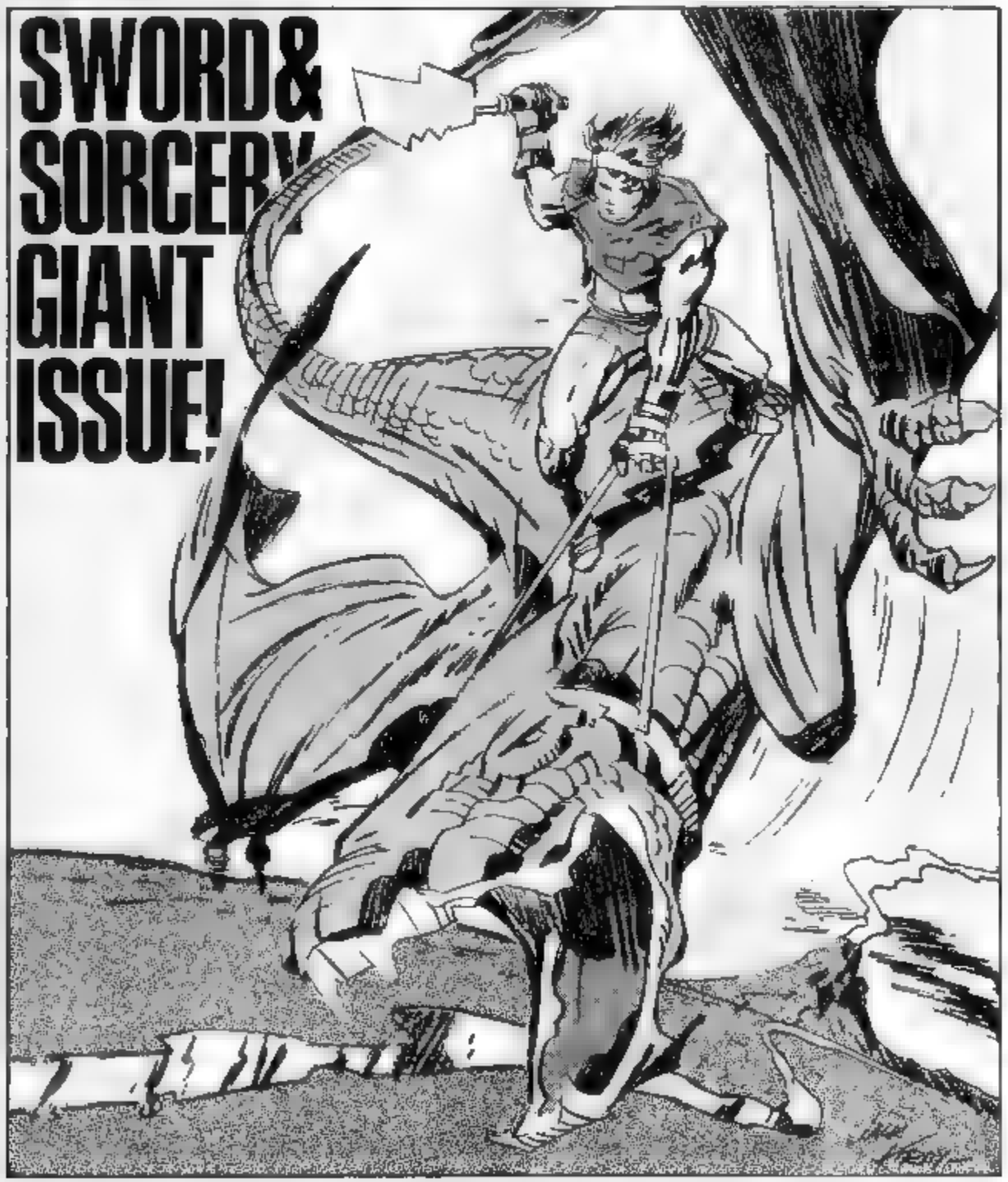

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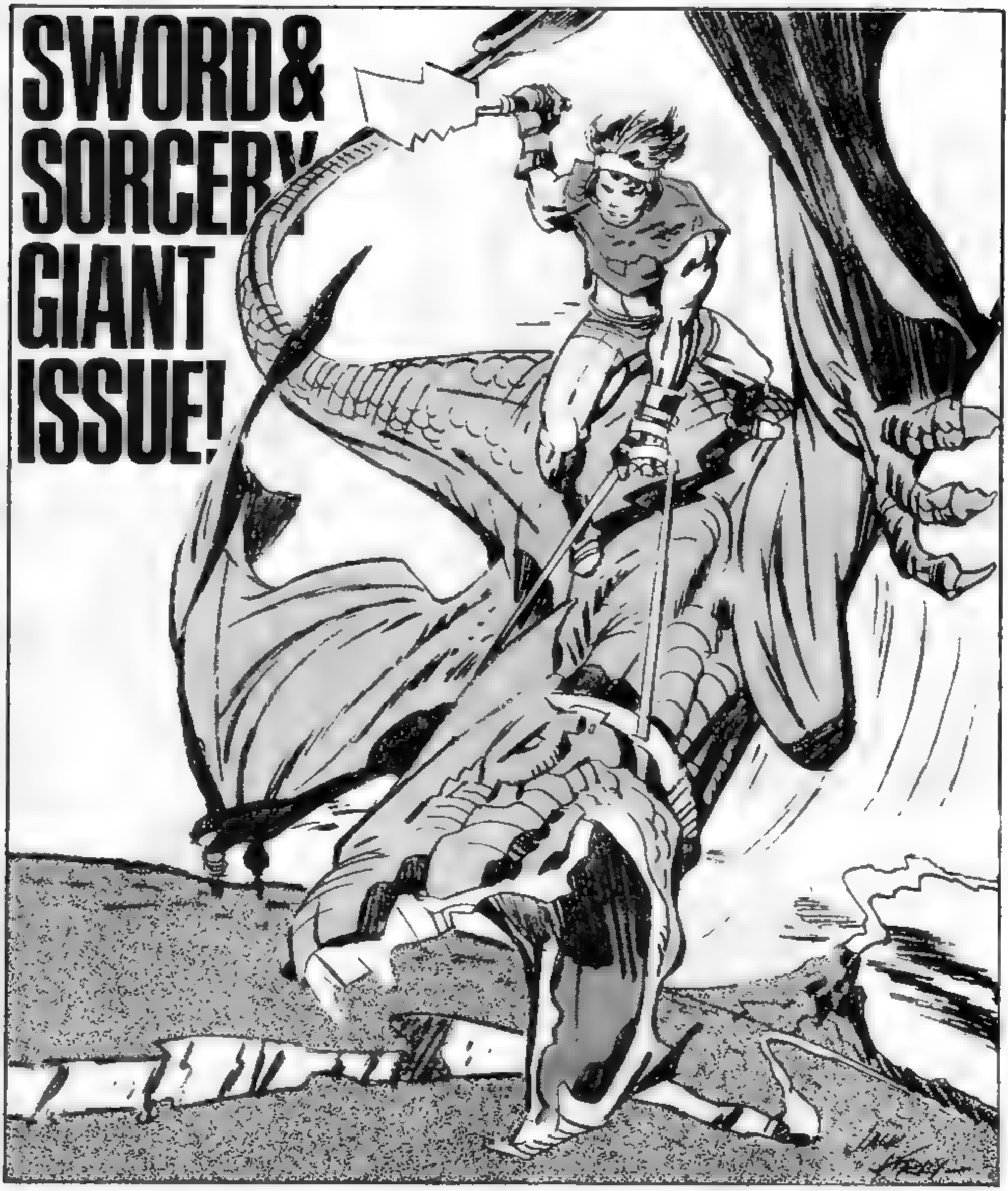
SWORD & SORCERY GIANT ISSUE!



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NO.5 SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE JULY-AUGUST 1973 ONE DOLLAR

BIG SPECIAL ISSUE:
SWORD & SORCERY

SECTION TWO

CONAN OF THE PULPS

"With his back to the wall he faced the closing ring for a flashing instant, then leaped into the thick of them. He was no defensive fighter: even in the teeth of overwhelming odds he always carried the war to the enemy. Any other man would have already died there, and Conan himself did not hope to survive, but he did ferociously wish to inflict as much damage as he could before he fell. His barbaric soul was ablaze and the chants of old heroes were singing in his ears."

And so it was, that with the rending of flesh and the shuddering crush of bone, Conan the Cimmerian made his presence felt. Blue eyes smouldering and black mane flying, he fought with catlike grace in the pages of *Weird Tales*, a pulp magazine which flourished during the 1930's and 40's and specialized in fantastic adventure, grotesque drama and unspeakable horror.

Weird Tales was edited by Farnsworth Wright and it was his decision that brought about the publication of the first Conan short story, in the December 1932 issue, titled "The Phoenix On the Sword" by Robert E. Howard.

Like Ulysses, Conan hewed a crimson swath to a point of literary prominence and like Beowulf, the mighty Cimmerian fought epic battles against unsurmountable odds.

Patterned after Greek and Roman mythological creations, Howard peopled his tales with Promethean giants, darkly insidious gods and hellish demons.

Like King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Conan performed great feats of daring. In the manner of St. George, he slew dragons, in addition to snakes, giants, demons and other more human foes.

Utilizing these dramatic and awe-inspiring situations, Howard produced a pantheon upon which he based his tales of savage splendor.

Such stories had been done before by others. H. Rider Haggard's *She* would encompass the barbaric grandeur of the African inland, while Edgar Rice Burroughs put *Tarzan* through his paces in the steaming, overgrown jungle. Both of these majestic works and others would display the intense beauty of an existence devoid of modern conveniences, technology and morals, yet Howard's work would stand out distinctively midst the multitude of colorful fictional works.

Where other authors pursued their work on an epic scale, Howard found his style best suited to short, tight-action melodramas employing the superficial elements that were used by the top novelists for their more expanded works. The ineffable exploits recorded by Homer and his literary descendants would be resurrected, whittled, reshaped and molded until they were presented by Howard in their distilled versions. The essence of those epics would be laid down on paper with the name Robert E. Howard appended.

Even though the Conan stories were published in no particular order, they did possess an abstract chronology in Howard's mind. Through minor clues and hints within the Conan stories, Howard's pattern became apparent to some of his more ardent readers.

With typical pulp flamboyancy, the character of Conan was established from his birth on a tempestuous field of battle, a primitive era of time, and a barren mountainous environment provided the cruelly savage background necessary for Conan's barbaric nature. Literally isolated from civilization until his middle teens, the Cimmerian grew up ignorant of the ways of cultured man. When Conan finally did see his first city, he was part of the berserker horde sacking it.

Towering over his fellow warriors, the panther-like Cimmerian pursued various occupations in various ways—most of them larcenous. By nature an ebullient warrior, Conan found his savageness in continuous conflict with civilization's rules and guidelines. Accustomed to the law of the jungle, Conan easily fell into the role of the "hunter" with fat noblemen and their bulging purses being the "hunted." Thievery suited the character of the Cimmerian, and so, in the story, "Tower of the Elephant," in the March 1933 issue of *Weird Tales*, Conan would begin his short-lived career as a thief. Short-lived because, while he was young and strong, his skill in the fine art of purse purloining was not up to par.

In the interim before his next venture, Conan was caught. Incarceration proved distasteful, so he made moves to extricate himself, all of them mortally violent. Penniless, far from home and unemployed, the hapless Cimmerian fell into a lethargic mood and journeyed back to his native land to renew friendships. He was not to remain home long however, for, gripped by wanderlust, Conan soon returned to the realms of civilized man.

Once again plying the trade of a thief in the "God in the Bowl," printed in the September 1932 issue of *Space Science*, Conan would do battle with a human-headed serpent and, through a misunderstanding, would be branded a murderer. With the dogs of civilization's authority at his heels, Conan ran—straight into trouble. In the story "Rogues in the House," from the January 1934 issue of *Weird Tales*, Conan fought wizardry and a great ape. Through all the many set-backs along his way Conan would persevere.

"Queen of the Black Coast," published in May of 1932, would lead to Conan's first brush with love. Her name was Belit and she was a female pirate. A tempestous love developed but was cut short by her untimely death.

Repulsed from piracy by Belit's death, Conan put ashore in a land of great black warriors. Rallying the blacks with his superior knowledge of weapons and organizational methods, the displaced Cimmerian welded them into a tightly knit fighting unit to rival any army. Unfortunately for Conan, while he was climbing up the ladder of success to military prominance, he was also making enemies. Through a series of tribal-political moves, Conan was ousted and forced to run for his life. This rather uncomfortable turn of events was published in the spring 1967 issue of *Magazine of Horror*, in the story "The Vale of Lost Women."

Returning to the haunts of the white man, Conan took service as a mercenary and rose steadily through the ranks, due to his savage ferocity in battle. By choosing the right side at the right time, Conan found himself servicing the Queen as her royal consort in the June 1933 *Weird Tales* story "Black Colossus."

Rebelling against his role as a sex object, Conan left to once again test his sword. In the story, "Shadows in the Moonlight," published in the April 1947 issue of *Weird Tales*, Conan joined the ruffian horde of the mounted Kozaki. Calling themselves the Red Brotherhood, the rough-hewn cavalry soon came to heel under the eye of the burly Cimmerian. Terrorizing local merchants brought Conan to the attention of the royal authorities, who dispatched an armed force that successfully crushed the raiders. Escaping death, Conan joined the Khauranian army and once again began his regal climb.

This time the Cimmerian rose to the position of Commander of the Royal Guards, but not for long. Betrayed once again, Conan found himself literally crucified to a cross of death in the December 1934 *Weird Tales* story, "A Witch Shall Be Born." Returning from a brink of death seemed to be Conan's forte though, and return he did, avenging himself by staking his tormentor on another cross in a scene of ironic retribution.

In the November 1935 *Weird Tales*, Conan was again pursuing the occupation of a thief, his efforts for once being rewarded in the tale, "Shadows in Zomboula."

Returning a second time to the newly reformed Kozaki Brotherhood in the "Devil In Iron," from the August 1934 issue of *Weird Tales*, Conan consolidated his leadership and was soon commanding again. This time he allied his pirate following with the dark riders to form a truly magnificent military legion—to once again be crushed by the superior forces of law and order.

Serialized in the September, October and November 1934 issues of *Weird Tales*, "The People of the Black Circle" found Conan in the high mountain wastes, this time commanding the rugged Afghuli tribesman. Attempting to weld them into a single army, Conan had visions of an empire under his rule, but complications arose and his ambitions vanished into thin air.

Battling his way back to civilization, the great Cimmerian again sold his sword to the highest bidder. Through a series of errors, he picked the wrong side to fight on and found himself one of the few survivors left at the desert's edge in the September 1933 *Weird Tales* story "The Slithering Shadow."

In the story "The Pool of the Black One," Conan returned to the sea and the pirate way of life. Crimson oceans of blood marked his path through the foam crested waves in this October 1933 *Weird Tales* story.

Succumbing to the wiles of a woman, Conan took to the watery field of battle with Vilayet, a lusty wench of a female pirate, at his side as well as in his bunk. "Red Nails" was the story's title. Nearly novel length, it appeared in the July, August, September and October 1936 issues of *Weird Tales*. This story marks Howard's last writing of Conan's corsair escapades.

The March 1935 issue of *Weird Tales* saw the barbarian turn mercenary so that he might get closer to, and gain more knowledge of his goal in "The Jewels of Gwahlur." From this point on, Conan's rise to

the throne took its final turn as he entered service in the army of Aquilonia

"The Black Stranger," published in *Fantasy Magazine* in March 1953, found Conan a general in the service of King Numedides of Aquilonia. The Cimmerian's rather obvious opportunistic climbing up the socio-political ladder came to the attention of the royal court. As a result, Conan had to leave the country, prodded by the points of pursuing spears. Running only as far as the Pictish border, Conan then turned, rallied about him another army of outlaws and started hacking and hewing his way back up the steps of the palace.

The instincts of an animal tracking game would guide his footsteps during this bloody civil war. As a major factor in the rebellion, Conan moved freely yet surely on a predestined course of his own. Seizing the initiative at a crucial moment, Conan stormed the city, killed the incumbent King Numedides on the steps of his throne, and seized the Crown for himself

King Conan of Aquilonia! The sound of the phrase fell pleasantly on the ears of the Cimmerian ruler but he was soon to discover that his troubles had only begun. Court intrigue ran rampant and the new-found kingdom needed constant protection.

The story "Phoenix On the Sword" relates Conan's next combat against sorcery and mortal intrigue. Even his supposed allies in the neighboring kingdoms could not be trusted as they banded against him in the January 1933 *Weird Tales* short story, "The Scarlet Citadel." Rebellion against the outlander King became more and more outspoken, and a new civil war, spurred by members of the royal family, with the sorcerous help of Thoth-Amon, became a grim reality Never one to admit defeat, King Conan shouldered the burden and, by dint of his mighty sword arm, beat off his enemies and vanquished his sorcerous opponent

Originally titled "The Hour of the Dragon," this was Howard's only Conan novel, a master-work of action, adventure, sorcery and political intrigue. This impressive work was serialized in five parts in *Weird Tales* magazine,from December 1935 to April 1936.

The saga of Conan's adventures in the pulps ends here. But the forceful character of the mighty Cimmerian would survive.

Meeting with unprecedented success, Conan would herald the coming of an entire genre of literature—a genre existent for thousands of years yet never fully exploited. The essence of Conan's concept was the use of sex and blood in conjunction with a fast-moving plotline

An intricate weaving and manipulation of words would conjure up visions of carnage and bloodshed, slaughter and crimson death.

With the skill of a craftsman, Howard created misty, murky tableaus for the enactment of mysterious, sorcerous rights. Pentagrams and serpentine inscriptions lurk as shadowy embellishments to set the stage for necromantic happenings. Memorable scenes were abundant in highly descriptive mood studies

Women were gorgeous, well-endowed and tokenly plentiful. With practiced ease, the female characters wove intricate snares for the Cimmerian to stumble into, only to find themselves crushed in his mighty arms as the object of his fiery, consumtive passion. Seldomly important, they did, however, dress up an adventure story.

Howard borrowed freely from the works of popular contemporary authors. From Lord Dunsany and his friend H. P Lovecraft, he learned to weave ghostly scenes of mystic uneasiness. From Edgar Rice Burroughs, H. Rider Haggard, Harold Lamb and Talbot Mundy, he learned how to put together tales of romantic fantasy and adventure

With careful attention to the pulse of the buying market, Howard changed the setting and mood of his work frequently, from murky jungle to icy mountaintop, from burning deserts to salt-tanged oceans, from desolate hell-pit to clear-skyed grass veldt

Born with a penchant for trouble, Conan lived, loved and blazed his way through the pre-historic Hyborian Age.

The Hyborian Age was Howard's version of the legendary Greek Hyperborea. In the Hyborian Age there were no historic restrictions. While the rest of the world was experiencing the passing of ice ages, stone ages, bronze, iron and steel ages. Howard's Hyborians were enjoying the advantages of all ages from the very beginnmg. Their knowledge of mining and metallurgy far exceeded that of the rest of the world at that time. The Hyborians were truly ahead of the rest of mankind in many respects. They used glass and mirrors ages before the rest of us Chemistry and alchemy were developed to a crude yet workable level

The architecture and construction of Hyborian cities was far ahead of its time. Lighting and sewer systems and domed arches were to be seen, even though such developments were not prevelant on the rest of the globe until much later

Arms, armor and war machinery were also much ahead of their time. While the rest of civilization went about bashing each others heads in with stone, bone and wood clubs, the Hyborians utilized their technological advancement toward more imaginative means of terminating one anothers existence. Swords, spears, axes, maces, bills and daggers were the major means of mortal destruction. Bows, crossbows and lances were used to back up the aforementioned arsenal in case of failure. Chain mail, leather and armor plate with a helmet completed the warrior's ensemble.

Muscles rippled under sun-bronzed skin as Conan hacked and chopped his way to Aquilonia. Serpents with human heads, spiders, gigantic slug-wormlike monsters and slime creatures pooled their collective talents to keep Conan separated from his destiny. Burly buccaneers, wiry nomads and envious soldiers of fortune also conspired to terminate the barbarian king's career before it could begin. Despite all of these setbacks, Conan struggled on, vanquishing all, until one evil rose before him and he found himself in constant conflict with the worshippers of the serpent god Set.

Dating back to the genesis of life, long before the cataclysm that rocked the world and sank Atlantis, the serpent people were the original masters of the earth. With the coming equality of men, the superiority of the serpents wavered. Finally, on the blood-stained field of battle, the balance of power shifted to man's favor.

The foul black ichor of serpent blood flowed in profusion during the slaughter that followed. Despite the most painstaking extermination, a few of the serpents and their blasphemous cult managed to survive Sorcery and deceit being their weapons, the survivors of the lost race continued their cult. Discovering and studying the ancient ways, man soon began to clutch out in the quest for power. One such man was the Stygian, Thoth-Amon.

Born in a dark, mysterious country, Thoth-Amon acquired the Serpent Ring of Set, and with it summoned terrors from beyond the mortal plane of existence. Unfortunately, Conan's rise to power often coincided with Thoth-Amon's mad climb for glory—unfortunate that is, for Thoth-Amon

Unheedingly, by dint of brawn alone, Conan struck out against the sorcerous Stygian's mystic power Imploring his great god Crom for aid, the bold Cimmerian strode up to his neck in the tide of leviathan battle

With mighty strokes of his keen-edged, broadsword, Conan scored kills in an impressively prodigious manner

Even though only 19 of Howard's 21 Conan stories appeared during the pulp era, they were enough to create a sustaining character with a life of his own. Working from Howard's synopses, L. Sprague DeCamp, Lin Carter and Bjorn Nyberg have carried on, adding ideas of their own.

Conan weathered the years with a trail of death following him. Sinews straining and teeth gnashing, the loin-cloth clad Cimmerian stealthily stole what he could and boldly killed for what he couldn't. The supple grace of a panther and the jungle-born knowledge of an imperious tiger guided his footsteps. Prison chains and buccaneer sashes, warrior's armor and leathery cavalry accoutrement all draped comfortably and naturally on the tall muscular frame of the Cimmerian wanderer

As the years went by, Conan's swashbuckling nature mellowed with age until he developed into a sombre, moody leonine king. Steel blue eyes flashing, red cloak flapping and black mane flying, he strode vigorously through the great palace of his Aquilonian kingdom.

"He seemed more a part of the sun and winds and high places of the outlands. His slightest movement spoke of steel-spring muscles knit to a keen brain with the coordination of a born fighting man. There was nothing deliberate or measured about his actions. Either he was perfectly at rest—still as a bronze statue—or else he was in motion, not with the jerky quickness of overtense nerves, but with a catlike speed that blurred the sight which tried to follow him"

With regal assurance the character of Conan asserted itself in every situation, dominating the scene and setting the pace for boiling action and incredible carnage in a series which has spanned 40 years and appears ready to continue for that many more

Ken Bruzenak

HISTORY of COMICS 2

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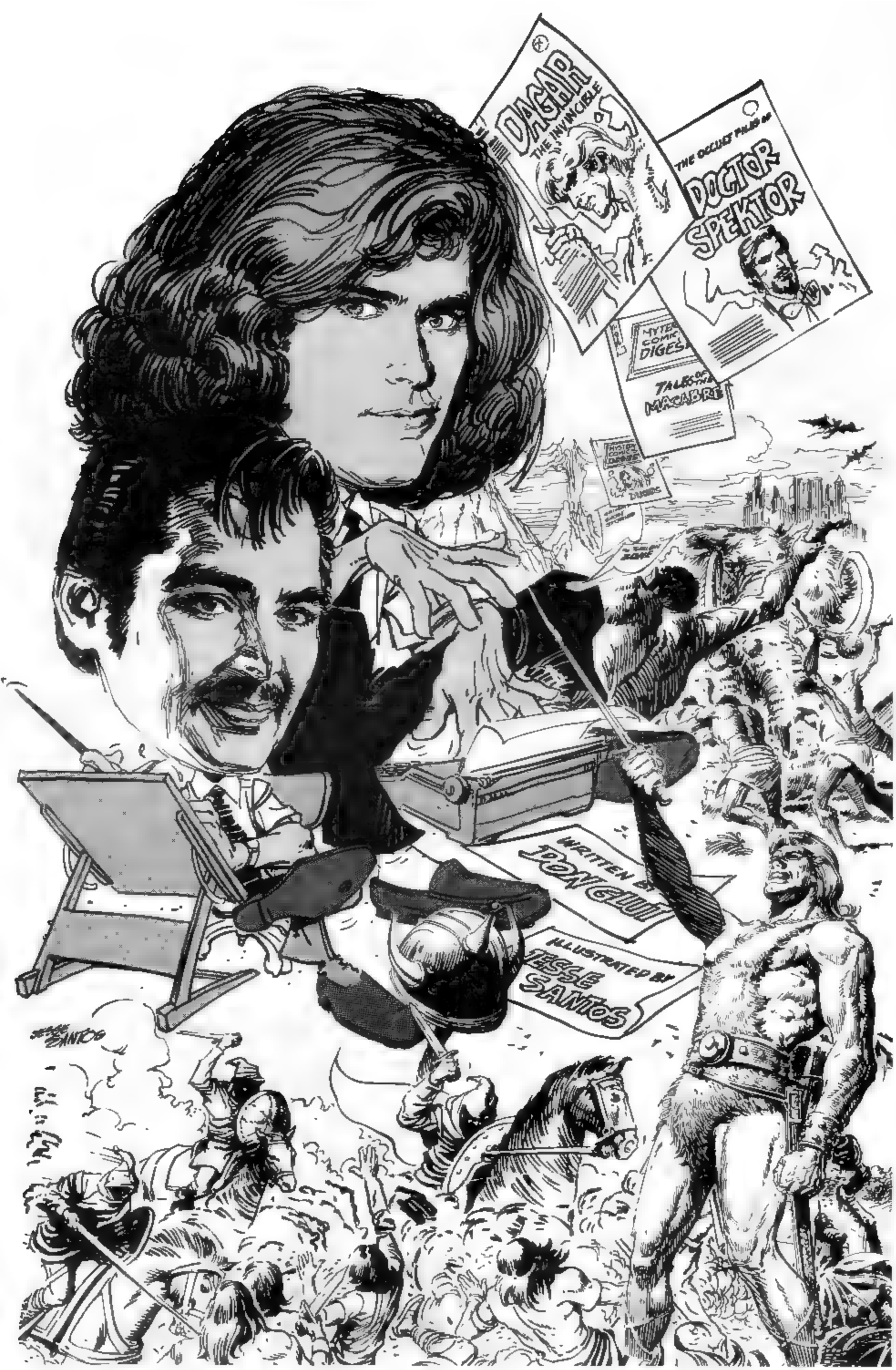

DAGAR
THE INVINCIBLE
THE OCCULT FILES OF
DOCTOR SPEKTOR
TALES OF THE MACABRE
WRITTEN BY
DON GLUT
ILLUSTRATED BY
JESSE SANTOS

THE TRIALS OF DAGAR

Dagar, a young mercenary warrior living during a mythical era following the Stone Age, has already battled his way through five issues of Gold Key's sword and sorcery comic book *Dagar the Invincible*. He continues to fight evil forces despite the poor distribution of Gold Key titles in major cities. And although there may be a few comic book collectors who have heard of (let alone actually *seen*) an issue of *Dagar the Invincible*, his first issue outsold every other Gold Key title that month, and his adventures have already been scripted for a full year in advance. Somebody must be buying the magazine, which makes me, the creator and anonymous writer of Dagar, quite happy.

Dagar's comic book origin is that of a young orphan boy who witnesses the genocide of his entire nation of Tulgonia by the hordes of the sorcerer Scorpio. His grandfather, once a great warrior, saves young Dagar from the massacre so that he might be trained in all manners of combat and someday avenge his people. Standing by his grandfather's deathbed, the adult Dagar, now his nation personified, vows to become a mercenary warrior, bearing no love for his fellow men or the gods which deserted his people, and swears to find and destroy the fiend Scorpio. That was Dagar's *official* origin.

Actually, Dagar's *real* origin goes back nearly six months previous to his "birth" at Gold Key. During the spring of 1971, I had written a sword and sorcery script, entitled "Castle of the Skull," featuring a one-shot barbarian hero named Shaark. The story was submitted by my agent, Forrest J. Ackerman, to a line of black and white horror magazines. It was promptly rejected by then story editor J. R. Cochran. The story immediately was recycled to Skywald, who returned it with a note stating that the story was acceptable, but that the backlog of scripts flooding the office necessitated that it be re-submitted the following winter. That was too long to wait.

About this time I began writing scripts for *Mystery Comics Digest*, a new publication from Gold Key. One of my early submissions to the digest was a story titled "Lizard Sword," which featured another one-shot barbarian hero named Daggar. The Gold Key editors were surprised and a bit confused. Sword and Sorcery was an entirely alien concept to them. They bought the script but requested a new title. I changed it to "Wizard of the Crimson Castle." The story then went into a stack of scripts waiting to be drawn by the company's new artist, Jesse Santos.

Jesse had been one of the top artists in the Philippines, working as a staff illustrator for *Halakwak* comic magazine and chief artist on *Paraluman* magazine. In 1967 he was elected Vice-president of the Society of Philippine Illustrators and Cartoonists (SPIC) and in 1970 he became a member of the Society of Western Artists. Jesse works in pen and ink, water color, oil, tempera, pastel and acrylic, and has earned an enviable reputation as a portrait artist. Seven of the comic books he did in the Philippines have been made into motion pictures, some of which were part of the "James Bond" spy syndrome.

In 1971, Jesse began working for Gold Key, just previous to my becoming a freelancer for that company. Jesse started drawing *Brothers of the Spear* when that strip received its own magazine. Because of his style Jesse was the artist chosen to illustrate "Wizard of the Crimson Castle."

Before "Wizard" was actually shipped out to Jesse, I submitted a second S & S story to Gold Key. It was entitled "Demon of the Temple" and again featured Daggar. At first the editors frowned on the idea of using the same character again, disliking heavy continuity in their books and not believing that any one reader would see both stories. I finally managed to convince them that it didn't matter, really. With both scripts in the editors' hands they began to see this type of story as a possible series. I made a presentation, complete with origin, and submitted it as "Daggar the Invincible." The New York office made the final decision to proceed with the book. We were in business.

Getting the old "Castle of the Skull" script back from Forry Ackerman, I revamped it, changing the hero from Shaark to Daggar, giving him more of a personality and altering him to fit within the restrictions of Gold Key's rigid censorship code. The script was okayed with the exception of the name—Daggar, the editors contended, was too much of a pun on dagger. (I had purposely given the hero a dagger to use in the first story, page 3, to tie-in his name with the weapon.) Although I wanted to title the magazine with the hero's name, the editor in charge preferred *Tales of Sword and Sorcery*. Swords and "daggars" on the same cover were simply too much! What followed was perhaps one of the most difficult phases of comic book writing -creating a new name. Dragar was considered, but I argued against it to avoid future jokes about him wearing a dress. The editor made up a dummy cover with the hero named Zagar; but that was forsaken when I showed them a Skywald comic featuring the jungle hero Zangar. I knew that if they didn't like Daggar they certainly wouldn't care for the original Shaark. Eventually everyone settled on Dagar. I was pleased, still pronouncing it with the short *a* as in dagger. But most of the Gold Key staff call him *Day*-gar, which I don't like, mainly because it sounds like it might offend the Italian readers. (Only after the third issue was published did I learn of an old Fox comic titled *Dagar*!)

Tales of Sword and Sorcery 1 was shipped out to the printers, with art by Santos, and with a 2-part story with two separate titles "The Sword of Dagar" and "Castle of the Skull." When the first issue was released I was happy to see that the title had been changed to the more dynamic *Dagar the Invincible*. Pronounced with a short *a*, the title was almost my original one.

Coincidentally, *Dagar* 1 was scheduled to be published the same month as the issue of *Mystery Comics Digest* featuring "Wizard of the Crimson Castle." Both stories had similar endings, so the editor changed the hero of "Wizard" to Duroc. Now we had *two* S&S heroes.

I had envisioned an eventual separate Duroc series, but knew that he would have to be different from Dagar. The funny thing about Dagar is that although he appears to be another barbarian hero, he is *not* a barbarian. Yes, he looks like a barbarian and he fights monsters and sorcerers with a broadsword. But Dagar comes from a civilized nation and has a nobility which prevents him from stealing or killing wantonly. Duroc, I decided, should be a barbarian. And while Dagar broods much of the time over his lost people, the jovial Duroc would seek danger and adventure just for the thrill of it. To compliment his new characterization, Duroc was given longer hair, a mustache and goatee in all of his subsequent adventures.

Duroc makes a guest appearance in "Death Between Floors," the second story in the 4th issue of *The Occult Files of Dr. Spektor*. When the inked artwork was purchased by the New York office of Gold Key, the powers-that-be decided that Duroc sounded too much like Turok, one of their more popular heroes. There were already two more Duroc stories, pencilled by Jesse and awaiting Bill Spicer's lettering, for *Mystery Comics Digest*. By the time they go to press, Duroc's name will probably be changed to something like Durac, Duroc or Durac, the character who starred in the original "Daggar" story, "Wizard of the Crimson Castle," fights alongside Dagar in the latter's 7th issue, "Two Swords Against Zora-Zal."

What is the future of Dagar now that he has defeated Scorpio? Although the 4th issue does seem to end the series, the magazine will continue, taking him back through time where Tragg, the caveman hero of *Mystery Comics Digest*, makes a one-panel guest appearance. He'll also be going under the earth and to exotic lands, sometimes accompanied by his beautiful companion Graylin. There is even an upcoming story in *Dr. Spektor* that ties-in the Dagar/Tragg/Spektor stories. But that is another article.

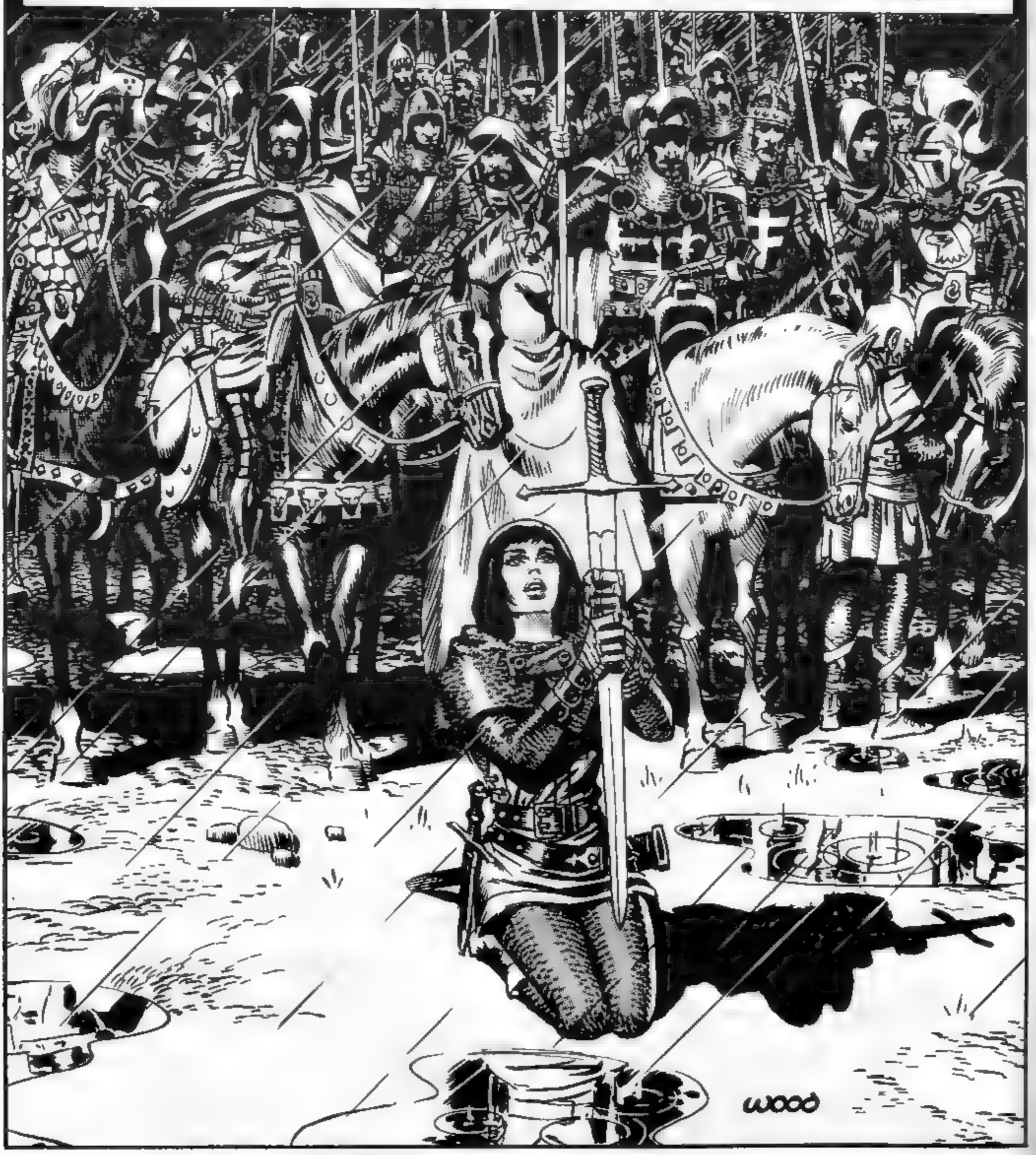
Editorial policy at Gold Key dictates a prescribed number of panels per page and a minimum wordage, which often cuts down the characterization achieved by the competition. Story is what is important and anything not contributing directly to the story is eliminated. There are also restrictions on how sexy the women may look or on the continual use of magic and monsters. And so Dagar the Invincible will, of necessity, be different from the other S&S features published by Marvel, DC, etc.

Since Gold Key no longer runs letter columns in their books, we get no feedback on Dagar. That's unfortunate. I for one would like to know how we are doing.

Don Glut

JOAN OF ARC

THE DAUGHTER OF A FARMER, JOAN WAS BORN IN THE VILLAGE OF DOMREMY IN JANUARY, 1412. SHE HAD NO FORMAL EDUCATION, AND ROAMED THE FORESTS AND FIELDS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE. SHE BECAME AWARE OF THE DEVASTATION THE INVADING ENGLISH WERE CAUSING, AND, GUIDED BY HER VISIONS, SHE WENT TO THE AID OF HER COUNTRY AND DAUPHIN. AFTER A LONG STRUGGLE SHE FINALLY GOT AN AUDIENCE. IMPRESSED, THE DAUPHIN BADE HER LEAD HIS TROOPS...



The name of Wally Wood is synonomous with the field of sword and sorcery in the comics. Since his earliest barbarian stories in the pages of STRANGE WORLDS, Wally has set the pace and style in the genre of wizards, magic, trolls, demons, swordplay and adventure.

With his work in the EC books, VALOR and TWO-FISTED TALES, Woody delineated great tales of heroic fantasy and battles between the forces of good and evil, garbing his characters in a profusion of belts, scabbards, chains, armbands, helmets, mail and daggers that delighted the eyes of his many fans. In tales such as "Knights," "Hannibal" and "Caesar," the golden touch of Wood is apparent, mixing reality and romantic fantasy in these tales taken from the pages of history.

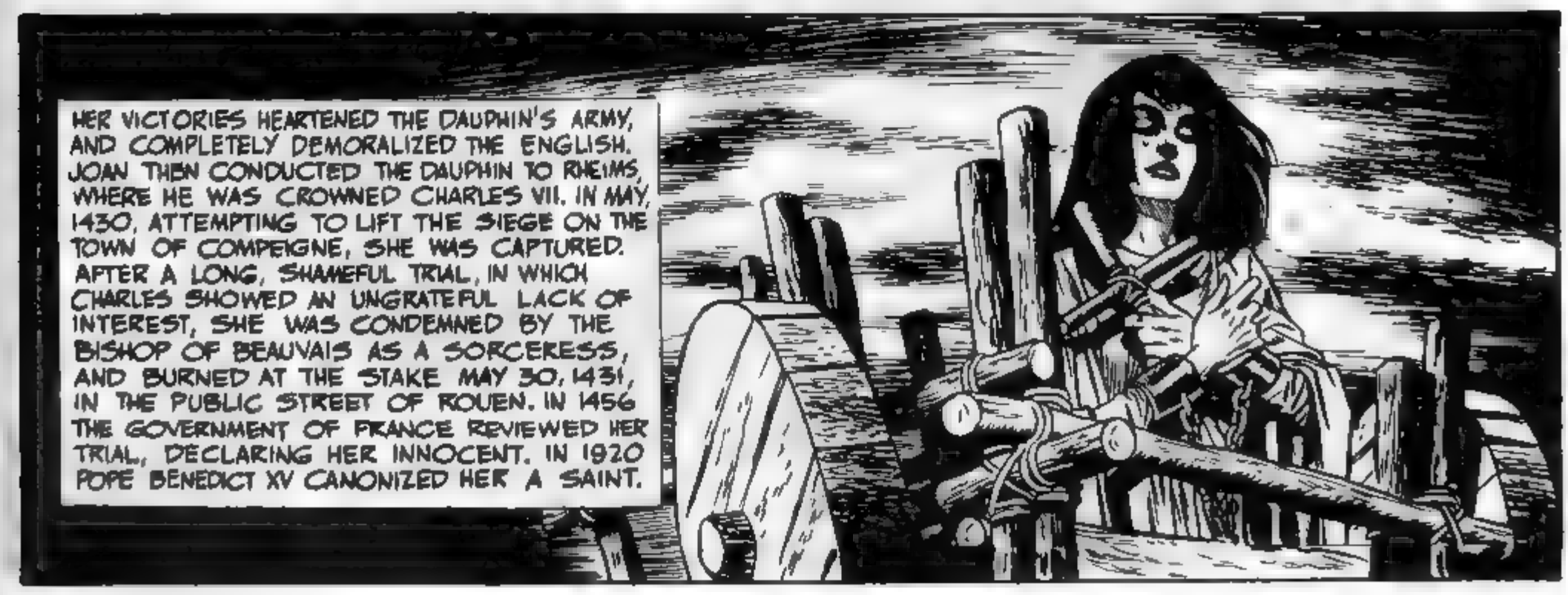
For the Harvey line of books in the mid-60's, Wally was to contribute the pseudo S&S strip, Earthman, and when the Marvel comics version of KING KULL was to be produced, it was only natural that Wally be chosen to ink the book.

Since then, the magic of Wally Wood has turned up many times in many places, most notably in a series of four short stories for Marvel, each concerned with another facet of sword and sorcery from Wally's repertoire.

The feature reproduced below on Joan of Arc is one of a series of rare Sunday pages that Wally drew based on historical themes. Others included Cleopatra, Claire Chennault and The Monitor and The Merrimac.

The future holds the greatest store of Wood's art, most notably the saga of the WIZARD KING, an epic adventure of heroic proportions that promises to be the definitive statement on barbarian comics from the pencil and pen of Wally Wood.

DRESSED IN THE ARMOR OF A SOLDIER, AND CARRYING A SWORD AND A WHITE BANNER, JOAN LED 10,000 MEN INTO ORLÉANS ON APRIL 29, 1428. WHETHER IT WAS THE EFFECT OF HER LEADERSHIP, OR THE QUIET DIRECTION OF OLDER HANDS IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY, BUT SHE QUICKLY MADE A SERIES OF RAIDS, WHICH WERE SO SUCCESSFUL THE BRITISH AT LAST LIFTED THE SIEGE.


HER VICTORIES HEARTENED THE DAUPHIN'S ARMY, AND COMPLETELY DEMORALIZED THE ENGLISH. JOAN THEN CONDUCTED THE DAUPHIN TO RHEIMS, WHERE HE WAS CROWNED CHARLES VII. IN MAY, 1430, ATTEMPTING TO LIFT THE SIEGE ON THE TOWN OF COMPEIGNE, SHE WAS CAPTURED. AFTER A LONG, SHAMEFUL TRIAL, IN WHICH CHARLES SHOWED AN UNGRATEFUL LACK OF INTEREST, SHE WAS CONDEMNED BY THE BISHOP OF BEAUVAIS AS A SORCERESS, AND BURNED AT THE STAKE MAY 30, 1431, IN THE PUBLIC STREET OF ROUEN. IN 1456 THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE REVIEWED HER TRIAL, DECLARING HER INNOCENT. IN 1920 POPE BENEDICT XV CANONIZED HER A SAINT.

STERANKO

SPQ

THE EVOLUTION OF HEROIC FANTASY

Never, since the beginning of time, has man been content with his state of existence on earth. He has always sought to escape the lot into which fate has cast him. In this search for escape he has often turned to the world of fantasy.

Primitive man realized early that, in the realm of his imagination, he could lead the life of a god. His weak emaciated body, clad in rotting furs, could instantly be transformed into a mass of rippling muscle, or be resplendent in lavish trappings, simply by closing his eyes and imagining it so.

As man's technology and civilization increased, he began to record the dreams and visions that he particularly enjoyed. Eventually these prehistoric storytellers would inscribe, in their crude picture writing, great legends of earth-shattering battles, monstrous reptillian horrors, evil ogres, one-eyed giants and steely-thewed heroic warriors.

With time, the written word took the place of the pictorial form, and the legends were transcribed so that other men could read, and be inspired by, these fantastic tales. Most of the writing of this early period reflected the times in which they were created- barbaric, riddled with wars, death and savagery, the night alive with evil gods, demons and the unknown. The early historians were living and writing what we have come to know as sword and sorcery fiction.

Much of this early writing, such as Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey*, is now looked upon as classic literature. The *Bible* itself contained some of the most fantastic storytelling ever recorded.

Down through the centuries, man would distract himself with these tales of adventure, fantasy and wonderment. Beowulf would come to slay Grendle and millions of readers would applaude his action. Sigfried would vanquish the dragon Fafnir, Sinbad would be trapped by the Roc, Ali-Baba would meet with Forty Thieves and Ulysses would blind the one-eyed Cyclops for an audience of several millions, who would retell the feats for centuries to come.

For a time, these flights of fantasy would be royal entertainment. Kings and queens in search of amusement beyond that offered by the mortal earth, would commission storytellers and minstrels to distract them after the sun set. The *Tales of the Arabian Nights* is but a collection of fanciful stories by Sheherazad, who spins a myriad of episodes for her husband's pleasure.

Stories such as *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Puss 'N Boots*, written by Charles Perrault, were originally done by royal command. Though they have all been emasculated, edited and relegated to the role of childrens' books, they are still fables of sorcery, darksome evil, death and heroes battling to right an injustice.

Each country had its own heroes and villains; Greece had its Hercules, Theseus, Achilles, Hector and Circe; the Germans had Tannenhauser and Sigfried; from Asia came the dragon-slaying legerdemain of Devi, Mo Mo Tero, Kintaro, Towara and Pele.

Most of these heroes are unknown to the contemporary reading public, but in their time and place they commanded a following to rival any of today's champions, capturing the imagination, hopes, fears, wishes and dreams of hundreds of thousands of adventure-loving peoples around the world.

Perhaps the most well-known fantasy figures are in the Norse and English legends. The Vikings elevated their fantasies to the roles of gods: Odin, red beard bristling and one eye gazing o'er the earth, and his sons, Loki and Thor, are known to everyone. Asgard, the Rainbow Bridge, Heimdall, Hela and hallowed Midgard have truly stood the test of time and will continue 'till Ragnarok and Valhalla claim us all.

T. H. White was the man responsible for the popularity and recognition of the English King Arthur legend. In his massive work, *The Once and Future King*, the youthful regent is ordained as: "Wart turned back to the anvil. He saw the golden letters, which he did not read. And the jewels on the pommel, flashing in the lovely light.

" 'Come sword,' said the Wart.

"He took hold of the handles with both hands, and strained against the stone. There was a melodious consort on the recorders, but nothing moved.

"The Wart let go of the handles, when they were beginning to bite into the palms of his hands, and stepped back seeing stars.

" 'It is well fixed,' he said.

"He took hold of it again and pulled with all his might. The music played more strongly, and the light all about the churchyard glowed like amethysts; but the sword still stuck.

" 'Oh Merlyn,' cried the Wart, "There was a kind of rushing noise, and a long chord played along with it . . . Wart felt his power grow.

"The Wart walked up to the great sword for the third time. He put out his right hand softly and drew it out as gently as from a scabbard."

White's monumental piece is a carefully detailed outline of the medieval English heritage of heroes. Gawaine, Modred, Morgan Le Fay, Galahad, Lancelot and the Round Table are but parts of the great, epic tapestry woven by the author. This book, more than any other, captures the majestic chivalry of England, and is the literary counterpart and inspiration for Hal Foster's magnificent *Prince Valiant*.

Robin Hood, the Sheriff of Nottingham and King Richard fall into this category of larger-than-life heroes of England. Maid Marion, Little John and the rest of Robin's merry men of Sherwood Forest, would rob from the rich to give to the poor, much to the delight of the poor, and the amused reader.

Even William Shakespeare can be said to have been writing sword and sorcery. *Hamlet*, *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream* abound in mystic spirits, enchanted warriors, gruesome deaths and explicit action. Sorcery and the sword were as prevelent in his writing as tender love and romantic joy.

Francois Marie Arout, under the pseudonym of Voltaire, wrote quite a few tales of fantasy and wonder. Best known for his work *Candide*, Voltaire was also the author of *The White Bull*, *Zadig*, and especially, *The Princess of Babylon*, in which pharohs, kings and shahs did bloody battle, and the horned unicorn played gamely about.

The lists of famous "classic" authors who have contributed to the sword and sorcery genre of fantasy literature goes on, encompassing Robert Browning's poetry, Kipling's enchanting tales of the jungle and Edmund Spencer's *The Faerie Queen*.

These men, as well as all their predecessors, back to the first cave man, all had one thing in common, they were all expressing their fantasies in which a very brave and very strong hero vanquishes the epitome of evil through cunning, sorcery or brute force. Unfortunately, few of these authors are recognized as being sword and sorcery writers. Most of them are not recognized at all by contemporary readers.

The old prose was written with a heavy hand that leaves many not understanding what they may have just read. Those who layed the foundation of the genre must not go unnoticed simply because they are difficult to read however, because we owe much to them. These men created the sword and sorcery adventure and collectively explored nearly every corner of the field. It would be difficult to create an entirely different monster, hero or even a new plot that these men have not already exploited. They were the masters. Nearly all else is embellishment, and it is this embellishment which endears modern writers to us.

As the great well of originality began to dry out, writers discovered that a better way must be found to develop an old concept. In the case of blood and thunder fantasy, the spring had dried up soon after the idea of "hero kills villain/sorcerer" was set forth.

Among the first of the new breed of authors recognized by modern readers was William Morris. Morris transported his heroes, villains, plots and stories to imaginary worlds. The entire approach remained the same. But now the concept of time could be flexibly dealt with. The civilization of the people did not have to be equal to their weaponry and industrial technology. Neanderthal barbarians could carry 14th century sabres, spears and armor, their ferocious stupidity being played against their destructive sophistication. It was William Morris' work that pioneered this area, exploring it to the fullest in the novels, *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* and *The Well at the World's End*.

Another author to explore fantasy literature was Lord Dunsany, the Honorable Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett. His *King of Elfland's Daughter* and 18 volumes of short stories served as commendable fantasy pieces, but more importantly, were an influence to writers like Howard Philipps Lovecraft and August Derleth.

There were many authors contributing to the heroic fantasy field in its formative stages. Eric Rucker Eddison dealt with the war between the Lords of Demonland and King Gorice III of Witchland in his novel,

The Worm Ouroboros. James Branch Cabell contributed *Jurgen*, *The High Place* and *The Silver Stallion*. Clark Ashton Smith was writing his own particular brand of sword and sorcery in novels like *Hyperborea* and *Zothique*.

Even these names are probably unknown to many but the hard core fantasy fan. Their importance lies not with today's readers, but with the writers that are popular today. These men were all significantly influential on the writers that have since become popular.

Kipling's *Jungle Book* had its effect on H. Rider Haggard, whose *She* and *King Solomon's Mines* had London wildly excited about heroic fantasy in primitive Africa. Edgar Rice Burroughs drew from both Kipling and Haggard to produce *Tarzan of the Apes*, and used Edwin L. Arnold's Martian sword and sorcery novel, *Lieut. Gulliver Jones: His Vacation*, as a guide for the highly acclaimed John Carter series.

Sax Rohmer, whose immortal Fu Manchu books are his claim to fame, also dabbled in the borderline fringe of far eastern sword and sorcery in his *Brood of the Witch-Queen*, and other related works of "infernal damnation."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was to bring dinosaurs to life and send his indominable Professor Challenger to do battle in an updating of high adventure titled *The Lost World*. Merian C. Cooper and Irving Wallace did much the same thing in their cinematic masterpiece, *King Kong*, in 1933.

Perhaps the single greatest incentive to the field of sword and sorcery was the advent of the pulp era. Printed on cheap, bulky, pulp paper, titles like *Argosy*, *Adventure*, *Blue Book* and hundreds of others voraciously devoured the literary output of thousands of writers.

It was in the pulps that Talbot Mundy's legendary *Tros of Samothrace* series, Harold Lamb's *Khlit the Cossack* adventures, and virtually every other major heroic character in print today first appeared.

Since the pulp magazine cost only a dime, it was accessible to millions, rather than the relatively few who could afford the higher priced hardbacks. Occasionally the hero was featured on a luridly painted cover, or depicted in a black and white interior illustration to delight the eye of the enthusiastic reader.

From the musty, crumbling pages of the pulps came the lyrically beautiful stories of blood and thunder by Abraham Merritt. His novels, *The Ship of Ishtar* and *Seven Footsteps to Satan* are fantasy classics. Hannes Bok, an excellent artist and author of *Starstone World* and *Sorcerer's Ship* also entered the pulp picture. Even though Merritt had died, he would eventually have two of his finest pieces, *The Fox Woman* and *The Black Wheel* finished by Bok in a posthumous collaboration.

Perhaps the greatest and most famous sword and sorcery character ever to appear came from the yellowing pages of *Weird Tales*. Robert Ervin Howard's Conan made his first appearance in the *Pheonix On the Sword* in 1932 and was immediately accepted by the pulp reading public. Even though the character of the great Cimmerian had already been established in two of Howard's earlier creations, *King Kull* and *Bran Mak Morn*, it was Conan that captured the imagination of *Weird Tales'* buyers.

Howard lacked the poetic quality of Homer, yet most of his work regaled in the vivid descriptive narrative that made his blue-eyed, black-maned, barbaric Conan come alive in passages such as:

"Down the slopes washed the tide of battle, dazed Nemedians swept on the crest of the wave. Their archers had thrown down their arbalests and were fleeing. Such pikemen as had survived the blasting charge of the knights were cut to pieces.

"In a wild confusion the battle swept through the wide mouth of the valley and into the plain beyond. All over the plain swarmed the warriors, fleeing and pursuing, broken into single combat and clumps of smiting, hacking knights on rearing, wheeling horses.

"Conan leaped from his own mount and ran at Tarascus, the king of Nemedia disengaged himself from his fallen horse and rose. Steel flashed blindingly in the sun, clashed loudly, and blue sparks flew; then a clang of armor as Tarascus measured his full length on the earth beneath a thundrous stroke of Conan's broadsword.

"The Cimmerian placed a mail-shod foot on his enemies breast, and lifted up his sword. His helmet was gone; he shook back his black mane and his blue eyes blazed with their old fire.

Though Howard's characterizations were practically non-existent and the plotlines interchangable, his colorful descriptive technique and bloodthirsty, imaginatively gruesome scenarios have spurred dozens of other writers to imitate him.

Clifford Ball was one of the first to openly emulate the Howard school of fantasy. Ball's character was Duar the Barbarian, an ex-king with black hair, blue eyes and the nerves of a jungle animal.

Henry Kuttner appeared in *Weird Tales* with the barbarian Elak as his heroic contribution. Though Elak appeared in only four stories, he was an interesting character nevertheless. His real name was Zeulas and he was the exiled brother of King Orander of Cyrena of Atlantis.

Norvell W. Page created the humorous red-bearded barbarian, Prester John. Though hampered by a lack of divergent plotlines, the series did present a colorful and imaginative portrait of the legendary missionary who would spread Christianity over the earth, even if he had to kill every potential believer in the effort.

Catherine Moore, the wife of Henry Kuttner, introduced her own character, Jirel, the flame-haired warrior of Joiry, one of the few female sword and sorcery heroines, and certainly one of the best.

Before the pulp era was over, there appeared thousands of straight or borderline sword and sorcery stories. Entire magazines were founded on the basis of the gore and mysticism of the genre. The heroic adventure could be seen to flourish within the pages of pulps like *Argosy*, *Adventure*, *Unknown*, *Weird Tales*, *Oriental Stories*, *All Story Weekly*, *Strange Stories*, *Fantastic Universe*, *Science Fiction*, *Dynamic Adventures*, *Magic Carpet* and dozens more. Writers contributing their efforts to the field were Leigh Brackett, Robert Bloch, Howard Browne, William L. Chester, Otis-Adelbert Kline, Jack London, C. T. Stoneham, and others. Today only a few digest pulps like *Amazing*, *Fantastic* and *Analog* are left to carry on where these others left off.

The pulps brought the modern blood and thunder story through its formative stages. Humor, death, optimism and pessimism were all explored, their strengths and weaknesses noted and filed for future reference. Guidelines were established and this great literary proving ground closed, just as the serious students of the sword and sorcery philosophy began to practice.

Though he was not the first, John Ronald Reuel Tolkein is the most famous of the new breed of writer that appeared after the pulps passed out of influential existence. His witty, charming, epic tetralogy would set the pace for many writers to follow, as well as rouse millions of young college readers to "support their local Hobbit." *The Lord of the Rings* still stands as the greatest, longest, single novel of sword and sorcery ever written.

At about the same time that Tolkein was gaining favor, L. Sprague DeCamp became a name to be reckoned with. DeCamp had entered the field during the pulp era by collaborating with Fletcher Pratt on their highly successful Harold Shae series. After the pulps died out, DeCamp edited and posthumously collaborated with Robert Howard on the Conan series for Gnome Press. Soon DeCamp was writing under his own name, such as *The Tritonian Ring* and *The Dragon of Ishtar Gate*. Most recently he has been editing the recent Lancer Conan saga and numerous sword and sorcery anthologies, as well as writing new Conan stories, along and with Swedish colleague, Bjorn Nyberg. Nyberg had been so taken with the character of the Cimmerian that he wrote a new Conan novel, and DeCamp, upon editing, had it published.

Paul Anderson a veteran writer of science fiction in the pulps, dabbled in the field with the *Witch of The Demon Seas*, in which his pirate, Corun, ran rampant on the Achaeran seas.

As time went by, more and more sword and sorcery fiction began to appear, but this time an entirely new medium was being used. The large, bulky pulp had become economically unfeasiblible to maintain. Even reducing its size to that of a digest was not practicable. The paperback had arrived, and was proving successful in America with its unique size. Although the paperback format had been in existence for years, it was not until 1939 that the first paperback company was formed by Bob DeGraff, called Pocket Books Inc. The paperback would make great strides as Avon Books Inc. soon joined the field, and then, with the appearance of Ian Ballantine, the paperback indus-

try would bloom in the late '40's. Ballantine, in quick succession, established the Penguin, New American Library, Signet, Mentor, Bantam and Ballantine Book Companies, almost single-handedly creating a new publishing medium. Books were published by the thousands—among them, sword and sorcery novels.

Although many new books still appeared in hardback editions first, more and more were debuting in paperback. Even old pulp stories were being reprinted to supply the public's demand. Today paperbacks are the cheapest and most widely read editions available.

Among the new authors who are currently dabbling in heroic fiction, undoubtedly one of the best is a native of the British Isles, Michael Moorcock, with his barbaric creation, Elric. Unique in that he is an albino barbarian, Elric of Melnibone fights for the Lords of Chaos in the well-written, masterfully depicted novels, *Stormbringer*, *The Stealer of Souls*, *Dreaming City* and *Sleeping Sorceress*. His mystic, black sword, Stormbringer, is really the star of the series and the master of Elric. A long time science fiction writer in England, Moorcock has also authored a tetrology of sword and sorcery books and numerous other heroic adventure pieces, but each lacks the fantastic magic of Elric.

Fritz Leiber, is a veteran pulp writer who has taken it upon himself to conquer the paperback field, and corner the market on the humorous barbarian. Leiber's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser stumble through scenes of what would be hideously bloody death and mutilation to others. They jauntily stride through sorcerous haunts concerned only with where they will find the next purse to rob. In the series of five books, Leiber has managed to capture the lighthearted fantasy of a fairytale, and make it blend superbly with the raucous blood and thunder of a battlefield.

Brak the Barbarian is John Jakes continuing adventure hero. Brak lives on a world parallel to Earth, and aside from being typically broad shouldered, mightily thewed and clad in a loin-cloth, he also wears his long blonde hair done up in a single braid. The virile barbarian has been doing battle in a number of tales over the past few years and will probably reappear to fight again.

There are many, many more barbarians currently in print, but they all seem to pale in the shadows of Elric, Brak, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser. The others are not bad books—most are quite entertaining in fact, but they fail to capture the color, vigor, verve and imagination of these three powerful creations.

Among these titles can be counted Jane Gaskell's trilogy of *The Serpent*, *Atlan* and *The City*, in which the Princess Cija is cast about by the whims of destiny, many times to the fate supposedly worse than death. Gardner Fox propelles his warrior of Llarn through thick and thin, while on the typically impossible quest.

Lin Carter's Thongor has found an unusually receptive audience in recent times, as the wandering king battles the forces of evil and sorcery for both his sanity and his kingdom.

Andre Norton has also been quite successful with her sword and sorcery titles. A prodigious writer, Norton has produced a multi-volumned *Witch World* series, as well as numerous interplanetary adventures in which technology has ceased with the Stone Age—adventures in which dragons fly and magic works.

John Norman's fantastic chronicles of Gor transport the eager reader to the chauvinistic counter-earth on the far side of our own sun. On Gor, the hero, Tarl Cabot finds barbarism rampant, women fit only to be pleasure-slaves, interplanetry travel, and mystic rulers known as priest-kings.

Kavin, Ka, Oom, Niord, Turjan, Suar Petal, Shoredan, Kelwin, Gavin Black, Michael Kane—the barbaric names go on and on. Legion after legion of longmaned cruel-eyed, overly muscular warriors doing bloody battle on the field of death. Roguish thief or noble king, nearly all are possessed of superhuman strength, animalistic agility, weapons mastery and superb equestrian ability.

When stood side by side, the amazing similarities become apparent, but somehow it doesn't matter. The importance, the success or failure of any story lies with the storytelling. An unskilled writer may take the greatest work and destroy it, while a skilled storyteller can take almost anything and elevate it many notches up the ladder of entertainment. Few will remember the unskilled writer or his creation. Many will remember the man who can transport the reader to another world. A world where in golden bells chime while beautiful girls, clad in silks, swirl to the music of the silver pipes or a world where blood flows freely down the handle of a gore-splattered red axe, where thundering war horses scream in fear as their riders meet death from a point of a spear or arrow; or a world in which the hero rides into the horizon, naked princess in his arms, and the fires of passion in his eyes.

The medium of the film was quick to recognize the potential of the barbaric sword and sorcery genre. Long before the phenomena of Conan there was the Fritz Lang silent film, *Sigfried*. What this extraordinary film lacked in sound it made up for in startlingly advanced, dramatic visualization and spectacle, based on the Germanic epic *Nibelungenlied*. All the elements of sword and sorcery are present in this classic. Dragons, dwarves, demons, sorcery and tremendous physical feats of strength and swordplay were exploited in this 1924 film and its sequel, *Krimhild's Revenge*.

In 1941, Walt Disney released *Fantasia* upon an unsuspecting world and created animated film history. Brilliant color and inspired artwork created the marvelous dream world of Disney in an overpowering display of fantasy. Nothing was impossible. The heroic struggles against all odds, the terrible storms, the evil witch's hideous spells and many many other scenes were more than printed on film, they were indelibly etched in the minds of all who saw them. Disney's other films, such as *Cinderella*, *Peter Pan*, *Sword in the Stone*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White*, all contained the elements of evil sorcery, a strong, brave hero and the impossible quest—yet something had been added. The plot and story had been polished to a brilliant clarity. The limitations of live action were overcome by animation, and interwoven throughout was the indefinable stuff of which dreams are made.

Live action sword and sorcery made a great breakthrough in 1940 when Ludwig Berger, Michael Powell and Tim Whelan directed the *Thief of Bagdad*. For the first time, in technicolor, real people were seen to ride flying horses and magic carpets, converse with a Djinn in a bottle and cope with a deadly six-armed female idol.

Since then, such films as *Jason and The Argonauts*, *Ulysses*, *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, *Camelot Prince Valiant*, *The Vikings*, *The Minotaur* and a multitude of Hercules and Samson movies have been made to appease the appetites of a demanding public. Apparently that appetite is still unappeased, as *Sinbad's Golden Voyage* soon becomes the latest contribution to the field.

The most recent incarnation of the sword and sorcery hero is presently occurring within the pages of the four-color comic. The highly visual nature of the stories is finally being recognized and transferred to this illustrated form. Conan, Kull, Brak, Thongor, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, Niord and Elric are finally being visualized, delineated by some of the finest and most productive artists in the world.

Up until now the barbarian could only be seen on a difficult-to-find pulp cover, a questionable interior illustration or an inadequately small paperback painting. With the advent of the sword and sorcery comic, all this is being changed. Panoramic scenes of battle, highly detailed portraits and the majestic splendor of the genre can now be seen as well as read, limited only by the imagination and talent of the artist.

Thus, the sword and sorcery tale has come about in a full circle, all the way from being a feared legend scratched in pictures on a cave wall, to end up, thousands of years later, as highly enjoyable entertainment scratched on a comic book page.

Where the sword and sorcery hero will next appear is anyone's guess. His current popularity on the comic book market is being balanced by a general recession in the paperback field. Whether he surfaces next in films or lies dormant for a number of years, of one thing we can be sure, he will not die. The image of a savage hero has survived for tens of thousands of years, his tales and exploits have come through centuries of war, famine, pestilence and death. The barbarian myth has, at times in the past, served as the basis of religion and the rallying point for revolution. Time itself has proved that the sword and sorcery tale has the strength to survive the advances of civilization and the sophistication of man. The savage animalistic instinct to live that has seen so many heroes through so many unequal battles, has and will continue to see them through the trials and tribulations of advancing time.

Ken Bruzenak

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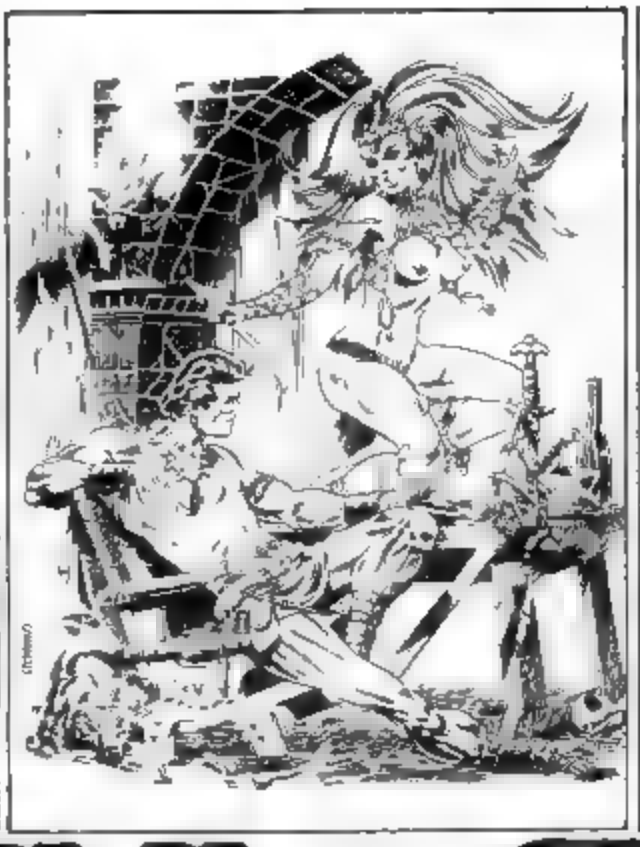
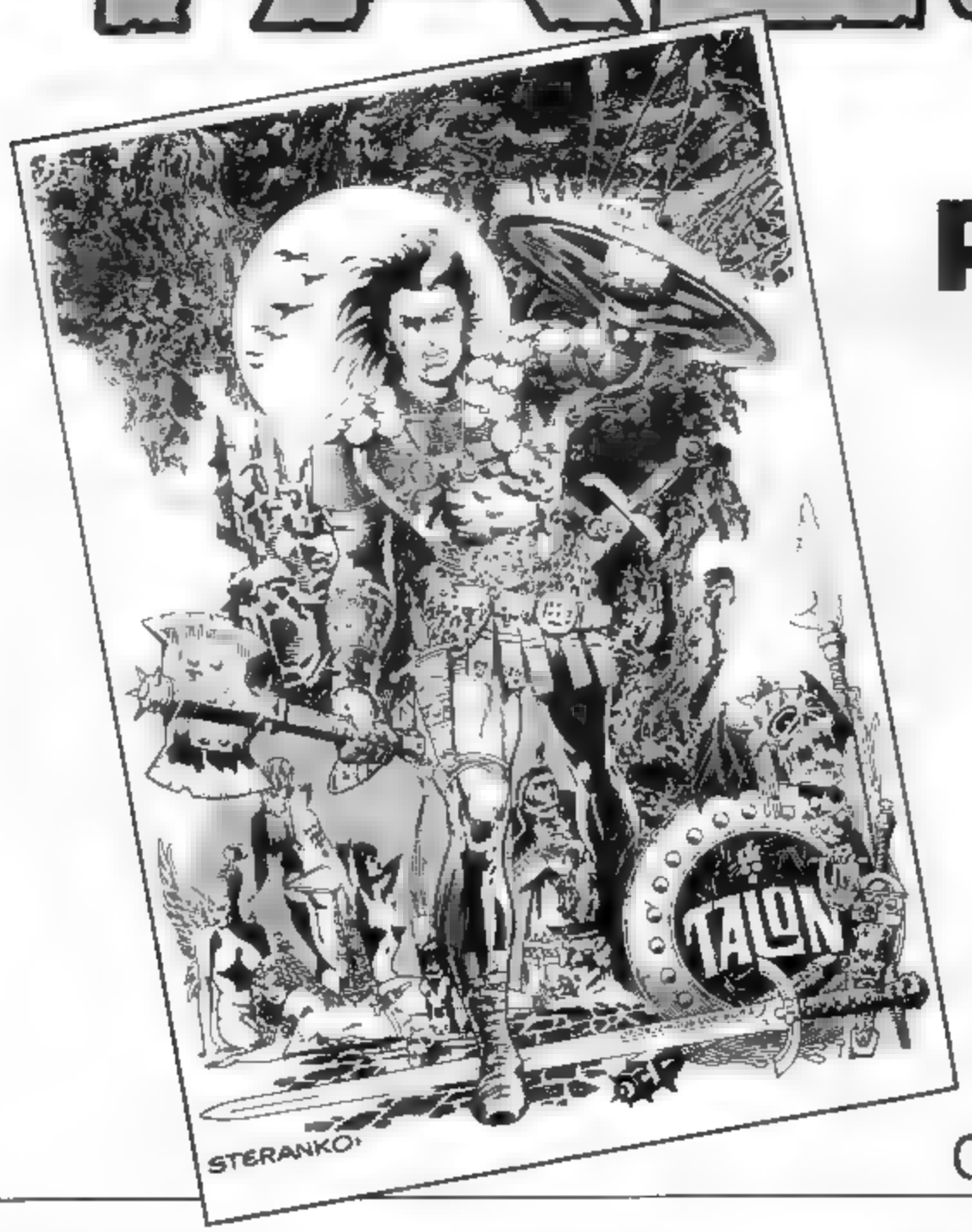


TALON



AVAILABLE NOW ON A GIANT FULL COLOR POSTER

Now, TALON, the sword and sorcery character created by Steranko, is available as a giant 23" by 32" full-color poster. Legions of comic fans have written since they first heard of him, inquiring about Steranko's dynamic barbarian hero, TALON — and in answer to those requests we are releasing this exciting, new poster as a limited edition item. With all the impact of a crushing blow from a blood-drenched battle ax, the giant figure of TALON, garbed in full barbaric raiment, strides forcefully off the center of the poster, out of a fantastic world of demons, magicians and naked slave girls, right into your room. Destined to be one of our hottest-selling items, the TALON poster is certain to become a rare, sought-after collector's item in the near future. Buy two and lock one away for your old age. Don't miss the most sensational sword and sorcery character since Conan. Don't miss the most exciting poster buy of the year. There will never be another quite like the giant TALON poster. Don't miss it!

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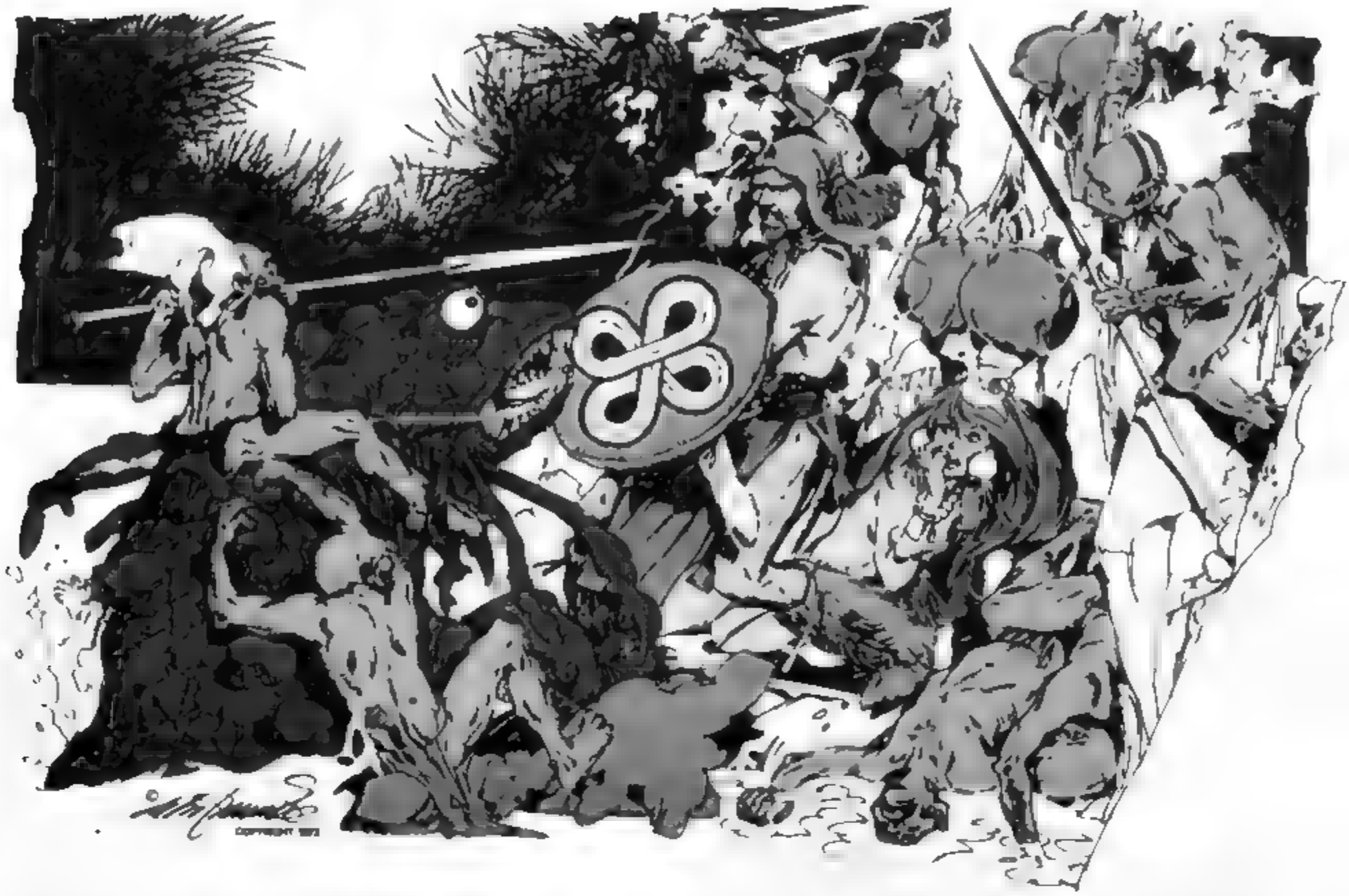


COMIXSCENE PREVIEW

Victor de la Fuentes is one of the most popular artists in Europe at this time. His twin editions of HAXTUR, a barbarian strip with deep psychological and science fiction overtones, are two of the hottest selling books in Europe and his work is highly regarded in the foreign magazine market. On this page we present a COMIXSCENE exclusive in the form of two presentation pieces for an as of yet unnamed barbarian series that will soon begin in PIF magazine. Unlike Haxtur this strip will be almost purely fairy tale in approach and concept making large use of trolls, demons, swordplay and fair maidens.

De la Fuentes is representative of the European art approach in that his work is highly detailed, decorative to the extreme and combines elements of composition and design for maximum effect. Much of the work on this, and many other European strips is done in the inking, the penciling being rather perfunctory and utilized mostly to determine size, shape and design. Such an approach calls for an unusually comprehensive knowledge of art and ability to draw.

SWORD AND SORCERY IN THE COMICS

It was the Spring of 1970 the ads, the bullpen pages and the letter columns shouted the fact, CONAN IS COMING! Thousands of fans, envisioning Frank Frazetta's representation of the burly, blurry Cimmerian, wrote into the offices of Marvel Comics demanding that only Frazetta, DaVinci, or Berni Wrightson at the very least, be allowed to delineate the blood-soaked barbarian's adventures.

Roy Thomas, writer and associate editor of Marvel at the time, rose in defiance of these letter-writers and announced that the British newcomer Barry Smith would be handling the art chores. A loud groan of pain could be heard throughout fandom collected. A large number of readers, the young "kiddie crowd," totally ignorant of the earth-shaking importance that surrounded the choosing of Conan's artist, shrugged their collective shoulders and opened up the latest issue of the *Fantastic Four*, mumbling, "Frazetta who?"

Finally, in July, the long-awaited premier issue of *Conan the Barbarian* went on sale, midst the wail and ravings of fickle fandom.

"T'ain't Frazetta!" claimed some. "Just look, not a damned muscle on him!"

To which the loyal Conan fan would reply, "Yeah, but its really Conan! Just look at all that sword-play and fighting. They even had trouble getting it through the code." (At the mention of the word "code," every fan's face would twist with rage and the very earth would shake at the mere mention of such a blasphemous word.)

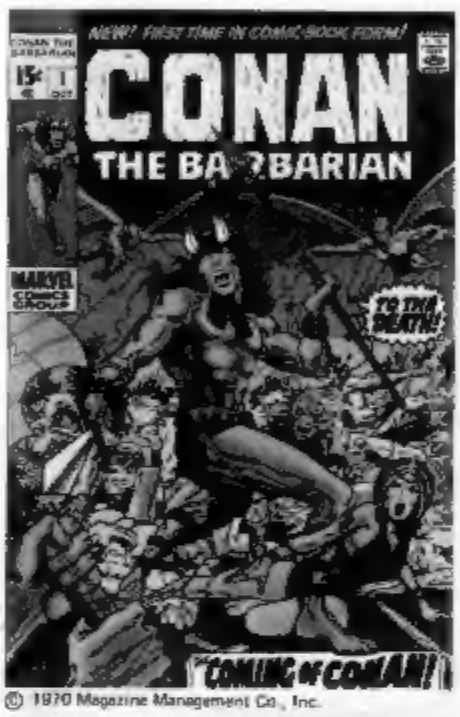
It was originally Roy's idea to do a barbarian comic, and the epitome of barbarians was his dream. Who else but Conan? There was a slight problem however, Stan Lee wanted to adapt Lin Carter's Thongor, or better yet, not do sword and sorcery at all. Roy went along with the Thongor idea and was soon rewarded with Conan, due to legal technicalities.

Barry Smith's early Conan efforts reflected his unfamiliarity with the comics medium, as well as his preoccupation with emulating the work of the French design-artist Philippe Druillet. As time passed however, Smith's style and approach would develop and grow, accepting and rejecting the influences of the comic artists surrounding him. Eventually, after a half dozen issues, a more natural Barry Smith style would develop, finding a place of prominence in the current history of comics.

Fans of the Marvel barbarian's adventures are likely to say that Conan is the first sword and sorcery comic published. However, a look into the past will quickly reveal that this is simply not the case. There have been many barbarians, but the passage of time and their pedestrian approach has caused a veil of obscurity to fall over the entire field, both good and bad alike.

As early as 1934, Alex Raymond was putting Flash Gordon through his paces on the barbaric planet of Mongo, replete with animal-men, savage cults, strange cities and mysterious unknown horrors. The early years of Flash Gordon would read with brisk, violent movement, resembling for the most part, the early Germanic legends of Sigfried.

In 1937, Hal Foster would give birth to Prince Valiant and the first true sword and sorcery strip would



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be introduced to the world. Utilizing the classic writing of T. H. White's *Once and Future King*, and his own carefully delineated draftsmanship, Foster would take Val through adventure after adventure, from the Misty Isles to fearsome fights with Attila the Hun. Sorcerous doings at the hands of Merlin, dreadful spells from Morgain LeFay and the wondrous magic of a compass would provide ample opportunity for Prince Valiant, King Arthur and all the Knights of the Round Table to close in deadly battle with the forces of evil. Throughout all, Foster's unflinching artistic integrity, in both the writing and the drawing, carry this strip to the very pinnacle of perfection, making it one of the best known and most respected in the world.

The role of the barbarian in the "Golden Age" of the 40's is anything but distinguished. Relegated to the position of third-rate villain or comically pitiful second banana, he fared poorly even though the phenomena of Prince Valiant was in full swing at the time. It was not until Crom the Barbarian first appeared in *Strange Worlds* in 1953, that the blood and thunder warrior made his presence known in a starring capacity.

Beginning in 1949, *Slave Girl Comics* offered a sampling of sword-play and some sorcery as well as a number of scantily-clad "slave girls."

In 1950, Joe Kubert pencilled, inked and lettered the adventures of the Son of Sinbad for the St. John publishing Co. and lent a sense of mystic wonder to the strip with his marvelous semi-cartoon style of the 50's.

As though some great barrier had been lifted, the barbarian was to make his first faltering signature on the pages of comic history throughout the 50's. Spurred on by the multitude of comic book adaptations of the "spectacle movies" of the day,

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the sword and sorcery adventures of Sinbad, Sindbad, Ulysses, Samson, Hercules, Jason and dozens of others would be presented, resplendent with ogres, cyclops, sea demons and sirens. Veteran artist Reed Crandall would delineate the thrilling adventures of the Thief of Baghdad, while the brilliant draftsmanship of John Buscema would be brought into play on such books as *Sir Lanclot* and *Hercules*.

The Dell Publishing Company put out hundreds of these movie and original titles in the fifties, their efforts represented by a book of quality that has given Dell a reputation for high standards at a time when the mediocre was acceptable at most other companies.

E.C. was in the sword and sorcery business during the fifties in a rather peripheral way. With titles like *Piracy*, *Valor* and Kurtzman's war books, Wally Wood and many others explored historical and fanciful tales of kings, emperors, barbarian tyrants and their domains.

Tarzan, Tor, Naza, Kona and Toka all might be grouped into a category of characters that paved the way for today's truer brand of sword and sorcery.

For the most part, these bare-chested heroes battled the chilling realities of their world. Whether it be the heartless tactics of a big game hunter or the hungry jaws of predatory dinosaur, the adversaries were almost always of a physical nature. Tarzan fits in here, despite the rather domesticated problems which he faced in the later years under Jesse Marsh. He did visit his friends in the Lost City, Pal-ul-don, Opar, and continually battled the strange crocodile men. It was adventures like these that exhibited the versitility and virility of Tarzan and Africa.

Cavemen with super-human strength and a dash of the current world thrown in has always been a favorite in the comics. Joe Kubert's

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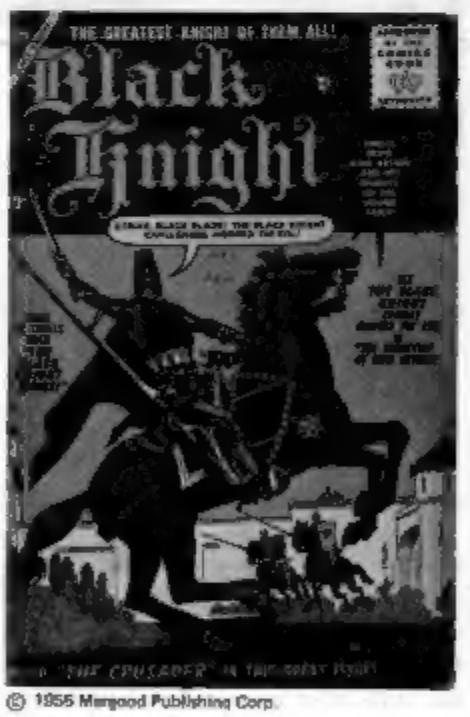

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Tor, facing every danger imaginable back in 1,000,000 B.C., became the first in a line of such cavemen as Naza, Sam Glanzman's Kona and Toka. It was the smaller and smarter man against the large and ferocious beast. The best example of this can be found in Gold Key's Turok.

Joe Maneely's Black Knight adventures would be the highpoint of Marvel's excursion into the field of heroic fantasy, combining the majestic splendor of knights of old with the crisp storytelling of the artist. Maneely also did the The Crusader as a backup feature in *Black Knight Comics*, another strip of warriors and hard-fought duels of honor.

During the fifties, many companies produced countless strips of heroic adventure. Gladiators, bar-

barians, soldiers of fortune and aimless wanderers, they journeyed to far-away places with strange sounding names, in search of the unattainable, defending the virtues of countless young maidens.

DC's first step into the minor sword and sorcery atmosphere which prevailed, was with a comic titled *The Brave and the Bold*. The three primary characters in the first 23 issues were Robin Hood, Viking Prince and Silent Knight. Robin Hood pretty much followed the straight Robin Hood legend, while Silent Knight was a variation of the secret identity ploy, being pulled in King Arthur's court.

Possibly the closest thing to the pure sword and sorcery theme was Joe Kubert's *Viking Prince*. A troubled, energetic young prince named Jon roamed the seas on a series of personalized missions which called for plenty of action and a sampling of strange and mysterious foes. The strip proved successful with fans at least, and was brought back for a two-issue reunion in *Our Army at War* several years ago. The interesting thing is that the characterization

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and determination put into the Viking Prince was much the same as that which later made Sgt. Rock such a successful character.

In the meantime, Marvel Comics introduced Thor, a god in the Norse mythological tales, now turned super-hero to fight crime and injustice on earth. The strip took a gradual turn after several years and the Earth life of Thor's secret identity was ignored and pushed aside for the battles and wars taking place in Asgard. The stories told about the life and inhabitants of glorious Asgard--realm of the gods. In a definite turn to the fantasy, with a large dab of super-hero thrown in, Thor became an important link in the change happening to comic books in the later 60's.

Charlton did much the same with their character of Hercules. The stories were kept true to the legends and followed Hercules on his deadly tasks. Sam Glanzman's intricate art and Joe Gill's lengthy verbiage was much in the style of the *Conan* comic from Marvel.

Another Charlton title published several years earlier was *Marco Polo*, in which Sam Glanzman translanted the moving images of film into the flat two-dimensional images seen on a comics page.

Also appearing in the early 60's was *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, by Frank Bolle, behind covers by John Severin.

Certainly one of the most forgettable comics of the 60's is the Denny O'Neil scripted *Nightmaster*. This series lasted three issues in *DC Preview Showcase*, and despite typically splendid Joe Kubert covers, the idea and the interior artwork by Jerry Grandenetti, Dick Giordano and Bernie Wrightson was weak.

In the mid-60's, there came a renewed interest in the works of several of the old pulp authors such as

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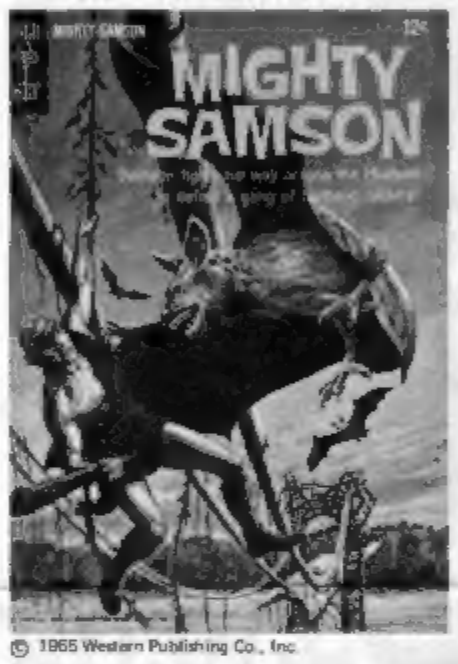
Robert E. Howard and H. P. Lovecraft. Howard, especially, paved the way for numerous magazine and paperback sword and sorcery stories--both new and reprinted. Conan proved to be the epitome of the barbarian/sword and sorcery hero. His adventures were exciting, mysterious, sexual, political, revolutionary and any other type of interpretation his readers chose to make of Howard's lengthy and descriptive prose.

Analyzing the success of Conan as a comic book character is somewhat simple, he possesses great strength and is quite obvious in his struggle to be an individual. These two basic characteristics were evident in the original pulp stories and Marvel chose to keep their version as close as possible to this original concept. Conan is now referred to as the archetypal sword and sorcery hero.

The comic book has fluctuated between a bi-monthly and monthly schedule for a while, having to undergo the same period of testing that any new comic would. With issue eight the doubts were totally wiped away, and *Conan* headed out full steam ahead. The first issue of *Savage Tales* was published during this period, featuring Conan along with Ka-zar, Man-Thing and several other characters with growing potential. It was a success with those who found copies, but the distribution was spotty and any results were tainted by the fact that the book did not receive a totally fair chance. A second issue was planned, but was discarded because of the sales disappointment.

It was at this time that the popular artist/writer, Gil Kane, put together an illustrated paperback book series called *Blackmark*. Set in the future, it was strictly sword and sorcery material. Like *Savage Tales*,



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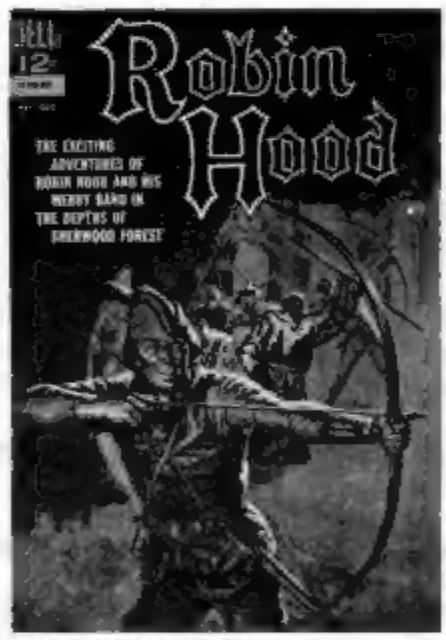
the first book was hard to find for the normal fan, much less someone who would casually pick it up for reading enjoyment. Sales being what they were, a second edition never did get printed. Kane, however, retained the copyrights to *Blackmark* and it has been scheduled to be run in the revival of *Savage Tales*. Being one of a number of sword and sorcery characters in the magazine, *Blackmark* will begin by reprinting the first book in 10-15 page installments, then going into the projected material if it is accepted by the readers.

Hoping to imitate the astounding sales success of *Conan*, Marvel quickly had Berni Wrightson draw up a short story based on the Howard character, King Kull. Not wishing to extend themselves too far, Marvel hesitated before pushing on.

Sometime after *Conan* began to be a real seller, the decision was made to try another Kull story, perhaps even give it a book, only this time with the artistic team of Ross Andru and Wally Wood. This new venture was to prove much better than Kull's first attempt. Brilliant layouts, superior artwork and meticulous inking made the first issue of *Kull the Conqueror* one of the best comics ever produced by Marvel in the



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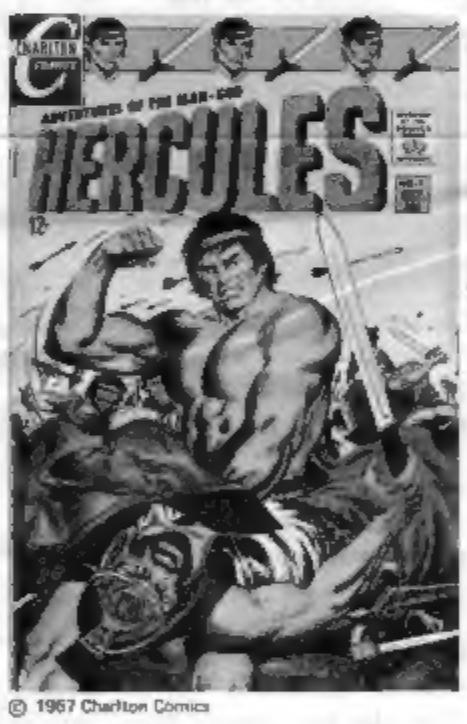

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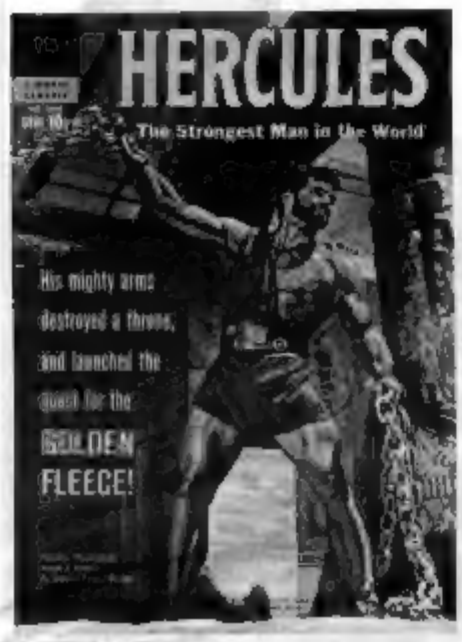
sword and sorcery genre. Subsequent books in the series by Marie and John Severin would maintain the high standards set by Andru and Wood, despite a suspension of publication pending sales returns. Currently, Mike Ploog is continuing the heroic adventures of the now--dethroned King of Atlantis.

With a trickle of success evident in Kull, Marvel added a pair of other sword and sorcery heroes in the monster book, *Creatures on the Loose*. Gullivar Jones--Warrior of Mars was a short-lived adaptation which lasted several issues, but was afforded the artistic talents of such people as Kane, Thomas, Wayne Boring and Gray Morrow. With issue 22 of the comic, Lin Carter's Thongor took over under a cover by Steranko, with a blurb that read, "From the House of Ideas that gave you Conan and Kull." Handled by newcomers George Alec Effinger

and Val Mayerik, the strip will probably be the key to future sword and sorcery stories and books from Marvel. Kull has been balancing between artistic excellence and the sales figures blues, and as of yet, Thongor is still an unknown factor, although one might think that the general sales difference between it and Gullivar Jones would be very little. Conan, on the other hand, has not only proven to be a successful character, but has managed to survive while undergoing three important changes of artist, with Gil Kane doing two issues and John Buscema taking over from Barry Smith as permanent penciller.



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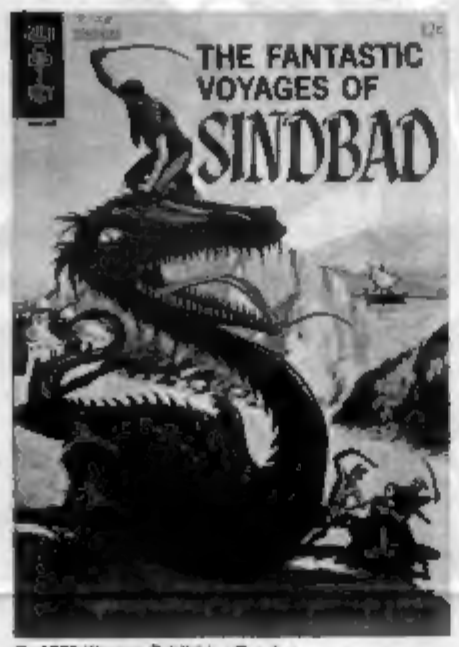
Under Buscema's artistic direction, Conan has become a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling, full of dramatic close-ups, brilliant compositions and breath-taking views of war and spectacle. Ernie Chua's inking adds an aura of barbaric verve to the strip, neatly complementing Roy Thomas's typically, highly descriptive and lush narrative. The book is selling, but now the task is to find out if Conan is carrying the trend alone, or if there is actually a sword and sorcery boom.

The biggest steps in to the sword and sorcery field for National has come with their *Weird Worlds*, and most importantly, their *Sword of Sorcery* comic. Under the guiding hand of Denny O'Neil and the pencil of Howard Chaykin, Fritz Lieber's famed swordsmen, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, have come to life. In book-length form, the stories are adapted from the original stories by Lieber, much the same way Marvel handles Conan. Because of deadlines, and the unsure atmosphere of sword and sorcery in comics, *Sword of Sorcery* has reportedly been cancelled with the fifth issue, but at this time the decision seems flexible at the least. Like most of the Marvel sword and sorcery, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser is essentially a trial move, testing any potential trend or market.

The one current media which has the most opportunity to deal with uncensored sword and sorcery has been the underground comix. Richard Corben has explored the theme several times, teaming up with Jan Strnad to produce the adventures of the unpredictable Razar—the Tom Jones of the barbarian set. There has also been two issues of Hale Han's *Barbarian Comics*, an interesting approach to the violent lives of such characters, with an emphasis on the blood and gore aspect.



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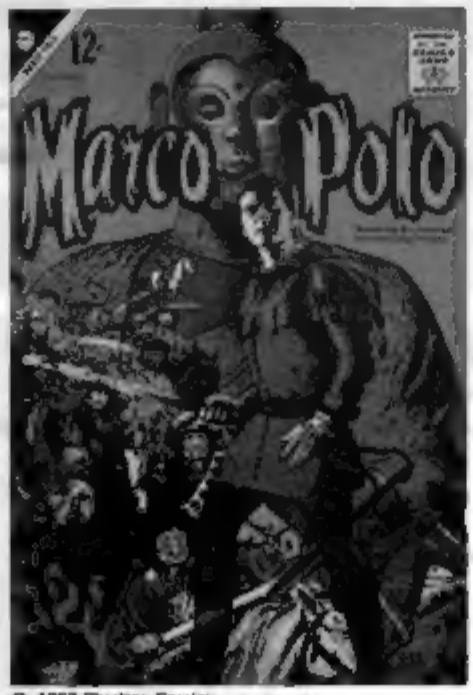

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The undergrounds have long proclaimed themselves the land of comic enlightenment, yet aside from Corben's excursions into sword and sorcery field, and an occassional dabbling by one or two anatomically weak artists, the entire range and scope of the field, the pomp, majesty, splendor, violence, sex, action and bestial vitality has either been ignored or found too difficult to grasp.

Gold Key's entrance into the sword and sorcery was marked by *The Brothers of the Spear* title which has moved upon a heroic framework for years, while their new *Dagar* book by Don Glut and Jesse Santos is a direct confrontation with the genre.

Archie's entry into the field with *Tales of Sorcery*, and a large black and white book probably with the same title, is expanding the range, scope and audience into a market that does not naturally read Marvel or National comics. (By Crom! Blasphemy!!!)

The barbaric adventurer has appeared in many fields to date; from the brisk exploits of the *Kevin the Bold* newspaper strip by Kreigh Collins, to the professional fanzine experiments, such as *Witzend* by Wally Wood.

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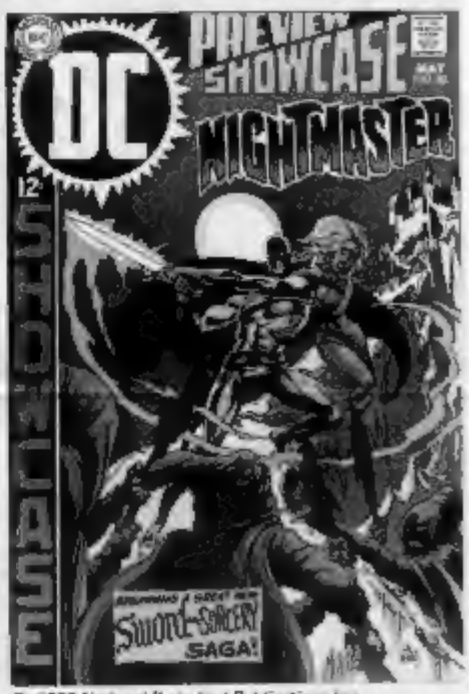
Wood himself has long been a moving force in the field of comic art. Influenced by Hal Foster and Will Eisner, Wood has developed an energetic, delightful style of his own that perfectly fits the approach of his Wizard King and numerous straight sword and sorcery tales, to the whimsical, paradoxically innocent approach in such tales as the Pipsqueak Papers and Bucky Ruckus.

Witzend, as originated by Wally Wood, was to be a forum for comic artists, a platform upon which they could air their views and try out new ideas. The book and idea proved to be a failure due to a lack of direction, but while it did survive, *Witzend* exhibited a vast array of heroic fantasy art.

Reed Crandall submitted his multi-medium Burroughs Portfolio, full of scenes of battle and carnage from Pellucidar and Mars. Wally Wood ran his own preliminary presentation of the Wizard King. Steranko previewed his Talon portfolio and Grey Morrow came up with Orion.

The high interest in sword and sorcery adventure has not been limited to the States, even though most of it does originate here. Throughout the early 60's, Frank Bellamy was producing a full-color, painted comic strip titled "Wrath of the Gods," heavily dependant on the sorcerous aspects of the field. Later, Bellamy would again return to barbarians with "Heros," this time following the adventures of a Roman warrior in lands of beast men and monstrous evil. Now, Bellamy is again on the scene with Garth. In this series of tales the time barrier is broken so that the hero can fight any type of villian, be it sorceror, evil king, or whatever.

Victor de la Fuentes' *Haxtur* is one of the deep, psychologically-motivated warriors that has been in the vogue lately. Haxtur has proved to be one of the hottest-selling strips in Europe, where attendance at comic conventions is reported to be phenomonally high.



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There has recently appeared on the comics horizon the presence of an idea as old as man himself—humor. In the early days of the comic strip, Alley Oop presented a funny look at the barbarian world. Climbing into his time machine, Alley Oop's adventures ranged from fighting at the side of King Arthur to battling against the hordes of Attila the Hun.

Just recently, Dik Browne has reintroduced the humorous barbarian in the guise of the roving, battling, superstitious, hen-pecked Hagar the Horrible. Hagar makes a great show of his bravado and courage, yet proves himself painfully susceptible to the slings and arrows of his own ignorance. Dik Browne makes grand fun of the brawny, silent barbarians like Conan by truthfully exposing them to themselves, by showing us what would happen to a warrior if he were faced with the situations so often presented by such writers as Howard, Moorcock and Jakes.

It would be ironically fitting if the humorous realities of Hagar the Horrible were to outlast the grim and foreboding fantasies of Brak, Kull and Conan.

Gary Brown and Ken Bruzenak

RED SONJA